

## WINDSOR TOWN FORUM

WEDNESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Jack Rankin (Chairman), Malcolm Alexander (Vice-Chairman), John Bowden, Hashim Bhatti, Wisdom Da Costa and Eileen Quick

Also in attendance: Councillor Phillip Bicknell and Councillor Jesse Grey

Officers: Wendy Binmore, Paul Roach, David Scott, Louisa Dean, Rob Large, Andrew Scott and Julia White

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor S. Rayner.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

### MINUTES

The Chairman went through the actions arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

Parking for veterans during civic events – The Civic Team Manager confirmed that he had investigate other potential areas for veterans to park that were very near to civic events in the Town Centre but, other than Windsor Library which had very limited parking, there were no other sites that were suitable for veterans to use for parking. The Civic Team Manager would continue to seek suitable parking sites and if any became available, he would inform the relevant veterans.

Construction Management Plan for York House – The Property Service Lead confirmed the plan was in the public domain and was available on the council's Planning Portal for that application.

RBWM Residents using Chalvey Tip – it was confirmed that residents could continue to use the Chalvey Tip without charge if they presented their Advantage Card.

High Street Clock – the Town Manager confirmed the clock was meant to be reconnected but, it had not taken place as yet. He expected the clock to be reconnected imminently.

The old Fenwicks Site – the Property Service Lead confirmed he had a meeting with the management company who had informed him that the area around Fenwicks had been tidied up some weeks ago. The Town Manager said he would have a walk round the area and make sure there was nothing that could be improved.

Terms of Reference for the Windsor Town Forum – Helen Price requested the Terms of Reference which makes up part of the Constitution on the Windsor Town Forum be consulted on to increase the number of times the Forum met each year and to make the Forum more consultative with more input from residents and attendees. It was noted that Parishes had been invited to attend Neighbourhood Plan group discussions but, attendees of the Windsor Town Forum had not been invited to attend those discussions. The Chairman confirmed he would speak to the Lead Member and find out how residents could be more included and involved in amending the constitution for the Forum.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2017 be approved.**

### WINDSOR RIVERSIDE UPDATE

The Property Service Lead had invited representatives from GL Hearn to address the Forum. They highlighted the following key points:

- GL Hearn were approached by RBWM in 2017 to undertake a feasibility study to look at options for the Riverside area
- They had a remit to expand how the area and integration between areas could be improved.
- The consultant team undertook fact finding which then moved on to a consultation phase
- The team were now moving on to looking at possible options which included looking at planning development and the heritage aspects of the Town.
- They understood the local economy, property market dynamics and movements such as foot, car, rail and cycling.
- Windsor had many historic assets which needed to be thought about sensitively.
- The BLP was progressing and there were issues such as housing pressure and local environmental issues that were being examined.
- There was a lot of room for improvement in the public realm of the town centre for residents and visitors.
- The Town as a whole had a volume of surface parking which faced pressures as there was not enough.
- A draft report was being provided to the Council
- The team had met with a lot of Councillors, local groups, land owners and partners for the consultation to take place
- They had engaged with Forums and Neighbourhood Plan groups and businesses in order to get a clearer picture of the wider objectives
- Issues raised included:
  - Parking – all groups said the issue was fundamental to how the Town Centre worked
  - Many groups highlighted the importance of the coach park but queried whether it was in the right place
  - Movement – there was a real sense of clear improvement to the public realm but there could be better wayfinding with pedestrian and cycle connections and opportunities to improve those.
  - Visitor experience – needed to widen the appeal of the Town Centre and lengthen visitors' stay and increase their spend
  - Opportunities for new Riverside activities were raised by groups
  - Stakeholders raised issues with car parks by the river – they should be a priority
  - Urban and public realm – flagged wider green element to increase experiences; Alexander Gardens could be improved. The Urban Real had historic assets so would need to have a good heritage strategy
  - The role of Eton in the wider offer should be considered as part of the Riverside strategy
- There was a merging set of objectives and the team were using them to guide their thinking around a range of options which would be discussed with Councillors
- Any changes needed to support and diversify the Town and work for residents, businesses and visitors.
- Overall, the team wanted to enhance the experience for anyone visiting Alexander Gardens

The Chairman started he was glad that lots of groups had been consulted. There was a lot of information to go through but ideas had to be discussed with Councillors in a workshop. All ideas and information needed to go before Members and then formulated at the Forum. The

Property Service Lead stated GL Hearn were just setting out the objectives at that stage and the points articulated to the Forum were not at the ideas stage yet. He added he was looking at carrying out workshops with Councillors and options would go before Cabinet in due course and would be presented to the public.

Councillor E. Wilson asked how much the feasibility study had cost to date. The approach was engaging but he was concerned regarding the scope as it could creep wider. He queried how the scope was being managed. The Property Service Lead stated the scope was passed at Cabinet but he was not sure if it had been in Part II so he would need to go back to Councillor E Wilson with that information. The timescale of the study had been put back by a month to ensure all groups could be consulted. The next step was to consult with Members. Councillor E. Wilson stated the brief was too wide. People asked for something to be done that was not the point of the brief. If the scope was too wide, it could appear that residents and groups had not been listened to. The Chairman said his residents would say that heading towards Arthur Road, there was a lot of coach traffic so it made it difficult to talk about the Riverside area without addressing the traffic issues in Arthur Road as that road approached the Riverside area. It was the same for the entrance to the Riverside area where visitors needed to pass shops. The shop fronts needed to be addressed and improved. All of those things needed to come together and all of those needed to be addressed as part of the same thing. Councillor E. Wilson responded the brief needed to be very specific. It needed to ask for views but, if those views did not form part of the brief, residents would feel they had not been listened to. The representatives from GL Hearn stated the brief was very specific. Ultimately they were to produce a set of reports with topics that would be deliverable. Delivering tangible benefits which hopefully captured imaginations.

Councillor Alexander requested a milestone programme so interested parties and the Forum could see how the plan was progressing. The Property Service Lead said he had spoken to Democratic Services to organise a date for an all Member briefing in the coming weeks to share progress.

Councillor Bowden explained he did not want the options produced to be a rubber stamp for building on Alexander Gardens as they were and should stay as gardens. He added that as a resident, he had not heard anything about the consultation and there had been no signage or advertising about the consultation. He was concerned that GL Hearn would produce a list of options or a milestone report and residents would say they had not heard anything about it. The Property Service Lead confirmed the brief that was being implemented was passed by Council to get the process started. The Chairman said the reason the brief had started as a bit of a blank page exercise was to find out what all the issues for residents in the Riverside area were. He expected the team to bring back a list of potential ideas before Members that could be worked through before consulting with the public.

Councillor Quick requested a place be set up in Windsor Library where residents could meet with officers and make their views known. The Service Property Lead said he would look into that outside of the meeting and try and arrange something.

Local residents stated that it hadn't appeared that any residents apart from residents associations had been consulted. A wider consultation was needed to include younger residents. Other residents requested that sessions for residents to express their views also be set up in Eton and Dedworth Libraries also. Helen Price said that the Windsor 2030 group were holding an event on this in the summer. She queried if their event could be dovetailed with library sessions so as not to duplicate effort. The Chairman responded that he would continue, with officers, to communicate the consultation and go further to obtain residents views and consult with residents.

- ❖ **Action** – The Service Property Lead to look into holding sessions at Windsor Library where residents can attend and express their views on the Windsor Riverside area and what they would like to see. The Service Property Lead to investigate how to communicate the sessions to residents.

- ❖ **Action** - The Chairman and the Service Property Lead to check the deadline for the Around the Royal Borough publication to see if anything can be included in the next issue highlighting the consultation and where residents could send their views.

## NIGHT TIME ECONOMY / VIOLENT CRIME

Thames Valley Police's Neighbourhood Inspector gave a brief overview on the issues of the Night Time Economy (NTE) and violent crime in Windsor. The main points highlighted were:

- Thames Valley Police (TVP) had embarked on a full review of the NTE and a meeting was scheduled to establish safety hubs so that violence resulting from the NTE had a multi-agency hub to tackle issues.
- The Neighbourhood Inspector reviewed all crim that went on and there were long term objectives to improve staffing levels and to make Windsor a safer environment
- She attended meetings which address Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) which occurred in Victoria Street Car Park.

Helen Price said rapes and a murder had occurred more recently which had been very disconcerting; she therefore, did not use car parks at night. Young people were using taxis to get home late at night instead of taking a very short walk home, because they did not feel safe to do so. Helen Price wanted reassurance that violent crimes were one-offs and that people could feel safe walking at night. The Neighbourhood Inspector stated that the murder as a one-off event, and although there had been a number of sexual assaults, some of those had resulted in prosecution; although sadly, others had not. After each case, she reviewed how that area had been policed and to see if any improvements could be made.

The Neighbourhood Inspector stated she acknowledged there had been a number of incidents in a short time frame but, there had been no significant incidents of violence in the last month. She assured the Forum that every incident was investigated thoroughly and measures were put in place each time to improve safety during peak times between 1am and 4am.

Helen Price mentioned that the Street Angels played a role during the NTE. The Neighbourhood Inspector stated they were looking to extend their role and had recruited 26 volunteers. They currently worked Fridays and payday weekends and were looking to merge with the Safety Hubs; they also interact with Ascot race goers during Ascot week looking after approximately 4,000 people. Their service was vital.

Councillor E. Wilson said the Council was about to finish its LED lighting programme. At that point, it would be useful to review how the lights were working to reduce crime or the fear of crime. He wanted to identify if the lights had made any difference. The Neighbourhood Inspector stated audits of street lighting were conducted. During the NTE, if lights were not working, they would be reported to make areas safer. The police did look at lighting in locations to see if it could prevent crime but, she was unable to tell the Forum if the new LEDs had reduced crime. Councillor Da Costa said some street lights had been in the same place for a long time. The Neighbourhood Inspector responded auditing was carried out to see if lighting was in the right place. It was part of that the Police did to reduce the recurrence of crime. There was a post that looked at what measures needed to be in place to prevent crime and that included lighting.

One resident stated he made astronomical observations from his home but, he could not do that with the new lights in place. Newspapers had said that burglars did not like the dark and Towns across the country turned their streetlights off at certain times of night; he did not know why Windsor had to keep them on. Councillor Bicknell said all of the new lights were adjustable. If there was a light that a resident wanted dimmed, it could be done remotely by a computer. Lights could also be shrouded to reduce leaking light.

- ❖ **Action** – The Chairman to look into if street lights in the Town could be turned off altogether at certain times of the night to reduce light pollution.

Councillor Alexander suggested with regards to the NTE, the Police could be looking at the crime and not the causes of crime. The Neighbourhood Inspector stated the Police worked very closely with partners and the Borough and carried out weekly visits with NTE teams to licensed premises. The Council supported those activities and also supported the Police with objections to specific licensing applications.

Susie Shearer asked for the double lamps in Peascod Street to be checked as some of them did not appear to be working. The Lead Member said his team relied on the public to spot failing lights and report them. He would go back to the depot and speak to officers to survey the lights and fix any that were not working. Susie Shearer also mentioned there was no lighting in the passage at Queen Anne Court. However, officers said the passageway was privately owned and therefore, not the Council's responsibility.

❖ **Action** – Councillor Bicknell to request officers check lights work in Peascod Street.

Councillor Bowden stated he lived in the Town Centre and there were three hotspots where noise and ASB occurred. The first action of the Police was to move people away from the area before issuing a dispersal notice. However, once people were moved away, no further action was taken, but the behaviour of the individuals that get moved on continued but, in a more residential area away from Town. The Neighbourhood Inspector confirmed dispersal notices were very rarely used; they needed to have an Inspectors authorisation every time they were issued. The first option an officer used was to ask people to leave the area. If they refused, the next option was to arrest them. Dispersal notices needed to be used for specific incidents. The Police did not have the resources to personally escort people from the Town Centre so they would usually direct people to the nearest taxi rank; the Police did not have the capacity to drive people out of the area.

Councillor Bicknell requested to know if there were any crime black spots where lighting had been an issue or, a contributing factor to a crime being committed. He was open to stalling extra lighting where necessary to reduce crime. He understood crimes were captured on CCTV so there must be good lighting. The Neighbourhood Inspector confirmed CCTV was of benefit and very useful for policing the NTE, it captured the majority of incidents. The Town Manager stated with regards to the two incidents of sexual assault mentioned earlier, CCTV was being reviewed for that area. He added that 90% of the people that enjoyed the NTE came to have a good time and went home quietly. The Town Centre had a very good community radio and taxi marshalling scheme but, it was always under review.

## VISITOR'S SURVEY

The Chairman asked Julia White, Visitor Manager, what happened to all the data and statistics collected. The Visitor Manager confirmed the team had 10 years' worth of economic impact data which was used to inform their three year plan and formed the basis of their strategies. She added as there was no marketing budget the team had to work with business partners, such as hotels and transport partners to achieve the action plan objectives. They worked together to create overnight stay package deals and had an accommodation booking service with an online shop to sell tickets for attractions and events.

Councillor E. Wilson stated people came from London and the Home Counties to see the castle, a few stayed over and then leave. He wanted to encourage visitors to stay and enquired if there were any deals on parking as it was difficult to park in the Town and could be expensive. The Visitor Manager stated there was not the budget to get in-depth qualitative data, all the team was able to do was push the positive message of what was on offer and publicise the next big event that was due to take place in the Town. Councillor Alexander stated Windsor Racecourse used the data compiled by

the Visitor Management Team in order to obtain planning permission for their proposed hotel.

The Visitor Manager confirmed the number of visitors to the Town had increased; however, the figures were usually a year in arrears. She thought there was a decline in day visitors but a rise in staying visitors but, the methodology of how figures were collected had changed last year so it was not possible to make an accurate comparison.

Councillor Bowden stated the Town was in competition with several sites. Windsor was essentially day visits driven by ongoing royal events. He added he had seen a document somewhere describing Windsor as London's country estate. The Visitor Manager confirmed her team had been using that to position Windsor as a place to visit to the Greater London and international audience. Councillor Bicknell queried if day visitors were repeat visitors as that made Windsor tourism more sustainable. The Visitor Manager confirmed the Borough as a whole received 7.5m visitors per year and a large proportion were repeat visitors. The figures were skewed a little by nearby catchments for shopping and dining.

Councillor Bhatti stated social media posting accounted for two per cent of visitors. The Visitor Manager said the team were new to social media and were still learning. Their following on social media was growing and they had set up profiles on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. The two per cent were made up of people aged 16–35 years but, they were also seeing an increase in more family groups. The team were talking to partners about how to best market the Town as a family focused destination. There had also been discussions about whether or not there was a gap in provision for older children and teenagers.

Michael, a local resident, stated that social media was a cost effective way to promote the Town so he was shocked that only 2% of visitors were as a direct result of social media, he felt it should be far higher. He added people enjoyed the Town because it was traditional with great architecture and he had concerns about how the Town was possibly going to change over time. The Town should pursue its traditional roots further and respect the heritage and rich history of the Town. The Visitor Manager confirmed the figures were from last year and they now had a member of the team solely dedicated to social media and marketing Windsor using different platforms.

Helen Price said she understood there was a strategy to increase spend and visitors but, she was not seeing it in the report. Hotels were saying they needed more hotel rooms too. The Visitor Manager said she would continue to work to increase staying visitors but, the figures represented were similar to the national figures. She added that without enough bed stock in the Borough, visitors were likely to be lost to hotels outside of the Borough. Some visitors would stay at the Copthorne Hotel in Slough for example due to availability and better rates. If Windsor offered that, it would increase visitors which would then increase spend. Helen Price commented that parking was very expensive in Windsor. The Visitor Manager said the results of the next years' survey would show what impact parking charges had made.

Councillor Da Costa stated the area of spend that had increased was in entertainment. The Visitor Manager confirmed entertainment covered arts centres, theatre and heritage sites.

STOVELL ROAD / MAIDENHEAD ROAD JUNCTION UPDATE

David Scott, Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships, gave a brief verbal update on the new plans for the roundabout at Stovell Road by the leisure centre. He stated the scheme was designed and the contractors were already on site to make the trial roundabout a permanent feature. There would be a zebra crossing to the left of the roundabout on the relief road side of the road. The Chairman said he had received a lot of feedback regarding the new roundabout and all of it had been very positive.

## ROYAL WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairman stated that the capital programme of works that were planned for Windsor Town Centre had been brought forward to be completed in time for the Royal Wedding. Andrew Scott, Civic Team Manager, explained the civic team were working with partners following the announcement of the wedding in December 2017. So far, only the time of the wedding and the procession route had been revealed and so arrangements were in their infancy at that point. In order to make sure visitors were looked after, the team had been working with rail companies to ensure there were enough train carriages and more trains running during the event. Temporary car parks were to be introduced to help with parking and the team would manage people along the route so that they were in a safe environment. The Civic Manager added he was working with the police to ensure the day ran smoothly and was also working with neighbouring authorities to ensure all traffic was managed.

Councillor Bowden stated he noticed scaffolding was being erected in the Town and hoped it would be removed in time for the wedding. The Civic Team Manager said he would ask contractors to move the scaffolding but, he suspected it was being erected ahead of the wedding to make the local buildings look their best come the big day. The Chairman explained to the Forum that the York House site would be appropriately covered in time for the wedding and the local residents would have some involvement as to how that covering should look. The Chairman said letters would be sent out to residents that lived along the procession route.

Susie Shearer stated there were a number of key buildings that required repairs to stone work such as the Guildhall. The Chairman responded the capital programme of works had been carried forward to carry out repair works to the Guildhall.

In response to questions regarding the removal of anti-vehicular attack barriers in Sheet Street, the Civic Team Manager confirmed he had raised the removal of barriers with the police and the military.

Councillor E. Wilson stated he looked at the £2.6m investment of capital spending and said to Full Council it was a lot of work to undertake in a very short space of time. But, the improvements would benefit the Town and not just for the wedding. It was a very big list of capital works so he wanted to know how that was being communicated to residents and who was managing all of the works. Councillor Bicknell stated it was a very fluid picture as there was so much to do. The commissioning team were working on the programme day and night to get it all completed on time. Some manufacturing dates would not be met in time for the wedding deadline such as the anti-vehicular attack barriers; but, new tarmac was being laid through the procession route and the pavements on the High Street and Peascod Street were due to be completed in time. Councillor Bicknell added the Town Manager should publish a report on the Borough's website communicating progress of the works. Marjory, a local resident stated Peascod Street had been in need of repair for years and it was disappointing that the only reason it was being repaired now was because of the wedding. The Chairman responded that those repairs were on the list of capital works due to take place in 2018 but, that due to the wedding, they were brought forward. Councillor Bicknell added that the repairs were relating to the grouting between the cobbles; the Town Centre would be on TV for millions to see, the Council was selling Windsor to the world and wanted to make residents proud to be Windsorians.

Councillor Bowden requested to reduce the weight limit of vehicles using Peascod Street as that was the reason for the cobbles and paving being in a state of disrepair. Councillor Bicknell stated there were issues with large vehicles but, a lot of the shops received deliveries through their front doors and so drivers could stop on the Street. He suggested seeing if officers could tighten the rules up for drivers stopping on the street.

Councillor E. Wilson said improvements would last beyond the Royal wedding and asked for an update on the Old Court refurbishment. The Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships confirmed work was ongoing and he would provide an update at the next Forum meeting.

Local resident, Michael, stated the cleanliness of the Town Centre needed improving. He stated there were often bad smells from garbage trucks and rubbish bags being left outside shops. Susie Shearer also mentioned that Charles Street underwent improvements but the railings were removed, she said it would be lovely to replace them with flower boxes instead. Councillor Bicknell said he would talk to officers about instating some flower boxes along Charles Street.

The Town Manager said one of the things the Town Partnership Boards looked at was how the Town looked and felt. It was really important the Town looked right and he had been talking to key businesses about making the shopfronts look better. A review of planting had been carried out and as a result of that, hanging baskets were to be put up in time for May so that Windsor could be in full bloom. Councillor Bicknell stated he was surprised to hear there was detritus on the streets of the Town Centre as Windsor had won awards for its cleanliness. Contracts for street cleaning had just been changed so, if there was any leftover rubbish, he wanted to know about it. The Town Manager said part of the review he had carried out covered deep cleaning. The cleaning of the streets was programmed in and would happen when it was requested. Local residents stated they felt Windsor was known as clean but, it could be improved if the main streets were washed every now and again. Councillor Bicknell confirmed the Street Care Team could be called in by the Town Manager when required.

- ❖ **Action** – The Civic Team Manager and Chairman to liaise with the neighbours residing in York Terrace and Regents Court as to how the covering of York House should look.
- ❖ **Action** – The Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships to provide an update on The Old Court at the
- ❖ **Action** – Councillor Bicknell to talk to officers to see if flower boxes could be installed where the railings were along Charles Street.

## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR / STREET DWELLING

The Chairman stated at the last Forum, a request was made for an update on what the Council and partners were doing on the issue of street dwellers and anti-social behaviour (ASB); since then, things had moved on and a paper had been presented to Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Following that meeting, the Council had received feedback from residents that the paper should have been split in to two individual papers and that more work would be carried out on it so it would not be presented to Cabinet till March 2018; it was also decided that the papers would be consulted on to make sure the approach taken was the right approach.

David Scott, Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships explained to the Forum that since the draft report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny, the Council had listened to feedback from residents and partners and the paper was withdrawn, split into two parts and would then not go to Cabinet until March 2018.

The first paper would look at rough sleeping and support for those sleeping rough and the other paper would look at the ASB aspect. It was a subject with very strong views and it had become clear that there were mixed messages and misunderstandings around the complexities of the issues. There were no simple solutions. The Head of Communities,



Enforcement & Partnerships added that he had provided Overview and Scrutiny with an update but things had again changed since then.

The Borough had seen significant increases in reports of ASB and some of that could be attributed to rough sleepers. The ASB was coming from different sources which also included the night time economy (NTE). The Borough had seen an increase in street dwellers with some dwelling during the day, while others were dwelling throughout the day and night. The Council was determined to provide support for individuals that found themselves in hard times. The Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships confirmed his team were working with the Windsor homeless Project to help provide support and temporary accommodation. The Borough had invested in facilities for the homeless which exceeded the national minimum criteria and officers from the housing team and community wardens had been speaking to individuals and ensure the Borough's approach was unique to each homeless individual.

The Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships stated sometimes temporary accommodation was taken up and others refused it so the Borough adjusted its offer and had some more success but, some people still did not want to engage. He added he had learnt over the last few months from comments received and he now had a much better idea of the issues. He was trying to take a number of stakeholders input on board which helped to shape the longer term plan. Officers and the commissioning team were all working with third parties to find solutions and the Council was trying to remove barriers to helping individuals. Homelessness was a national problem and the Council were looking at implementing best practice and using alternative giving to maximise support.

The Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships said the Borough needed to understand individuals and their chaotic lives, but others were not in the same position and did not need support as they were taking advantage of people's good nature. He was trying to look at alternative ways individuals could access good health care support which also needed an individual and unique response.

The Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships had been disappointed the report had jumped to enforcement as that was not the point. There needed to be an outreach service that could get to people that wanted to engage with services. There was a lot of work ongoing and ASB would be addressed separately from rough sleeping which would be presented to Cabinet in March 2018.

Councillor Da Costa stated it was great the two issues had been separated but he had a few points he wanted to raise:

1. The rough sleeping report should go to Adult Services and not Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
2. A Task and Finish Group should be set up to include all parties to address the issues.
3. The report should include an assessment of the type of housing and services required to be brought in to help address the issues.

Councillor Da Costa added that the report would define the Borough and Windsor to the world. The Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships stated the intention for the homeless strategy was to go to Planning and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel but, he would look to see if it should also go to Adult Services. He added it was important to note that the recommendations in the last report were clear that the report was about developing a strategy so it would be a multi-agency group that would the Council address the issues. An update would be provided in six months on the Homelessness Reduction Strategy.

Councillor E. Wilson stated it was a very difficult, complex and sensitive issue. In Westminster, there had been problems with rough sleepers for years and early attempts to deal with the problem had been hopeless; it had taken a long time to develop a proper strategy which was comprehensive and multi-agency. He wanted to see officers take on best practice and visit where that best practice had come from. Councillor E. Wilson had received many emails and calls from residents saying the Council needed to help and others stating residents needed to claim the streets back from street dwellers. The Borough needed a clear picture on what the

issues were, who needed the help and how the Council did that, and it needed to get it right. He wanted to see impartial data, he wanted officers to talk to Westminster Council to see who they talked to. He added it was a journey that would develop over time.

Councillor Bicknell stated he had been involved in producing a strategy since September 2017 and he fundamentally believed everyone would like to be able to wave a magic wand so that everything was fixed. It was a sensitive and complex issue and he liked the idea of setting up a task and finish group but, at the same time, the Council could not just keep talking about it, it needed to do something, as the Borough now had tents on the streets. The Borough had a challenge and it needed to sensitively produce a solution. Councillor Bicknell said the Council needed to work with all relevant agencies. There were 12 – 14 actual rough sleepers in the Town and there were approximately 120 families in temporary or emergency accommodation that needed housing. Each rough sleeper needed one to one individual solutions and the residents wanted the homeless removed from the street but safely and sensitively.

Sally Wright of the Windsor Homeless Project stated that what had been said so far was right, it did need a joined up working approach. She said she was glad the strategy had been split into two elements as for her, she worked with homeless guests and their main issues was their mental health and then it was their addictions. The Windsor Homeless Project (WHP) had difficulties working alongside mental health because they did not want to help when there was addiction. Her plea was to work together with the Council and other agencies.

Sally Wright stated mental health had to come on board as part of the strategy as stated in the report; she queried whether that had been costed and she also wanted to know why travel warrants had been stopped three months ago as it was affecting people being able to make it to their mental health appointments.

The Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships responded mental health was clearly recognised with very high incidents in the homeless. The council recognised something had to change as community intervention did not step in early enough. The Council was looking at not just dual diagnosis outreach workers, but also approaching mental health teams to ask them to have a worker that could get on board and help. Councillor Bicknell had talked to the Chair of the CCG to ask for help. The Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships confirmed he was unable to answer the question on the travel warrants but he would look into it.

Councillor Bicknell confirmed he had met with Dr Hayter and had a conversation regarding mental wellbeing and how together, they could support individuals. He added it was easy to get bogged down in detail and the issues should be above cost, cost should be taken down as a barrier. The government had put £1.2m into the Borough in order to tackle the issues surrounding homelessness but, if the Borough needed more, it should ask for it.

Helen Price stated the travel warrants were stopped because the forms were not filled in correctly but, that stopped people receiving the treatment they needed. Local residents agreed with what the Councillors had said; it was a very complex problem. The Borough needed an approach where there were 14 people that needed travel and a place to dwell. It was known there were other people that were not homeless but also required support to help them make better choices to help them live better lives.

Michael, a local resident stated he was very pleased the report had been split into two separate elements, that was a positive step. Mental health underpinned both rough sleeping and ASB. outreach did not go out to them but it was an important step to change that so they did. He questioned what was being done to police addiction and drug dealers, in Portugal, the government used consumption rooms to provide a safe space where mental health teams were so drug users could use safely but also access vital services. This also kept them off the streets.

Councillor Bicknell said homeless people were lost souls, they were not in control of their mental wellbeing and at least 12 had addiction issues, he did not think non-drug users could fully comprehend addiction. He added the Borough could provide 14 beds but, some of them did not want to leave their pitches because that was how they funded their addiction; it was a catch 22 situation. So that was why it was necessary to have all agencies and a task and finish group come together. Marjory, a local resident said it was a very complex debate and when you think of 14 homeless people, the invisible homeless were not counted. There was a huge area to investigate and it was vital to involve agencies and groups such as the WHP that talked to the homeless; all homeless people had a story to tell and some were addicted to alcohol and others were addicted to drugs. Unless the problems were addressed, the Borough would just replace the current 14 homeless with another 14 people behind them. The causes needed to be addressed such as mental health and lack of affordable housing.

One resident stated he was not from the UK but had only experienced kindness. He was once homeless and staying in a car in another country; what helped him get through the situation was having someone believe in him and hold his hand. The situation needed consistency and someone always there to help.

Councillor E. Wilson stated there was missing data in the paper. There was no input from the CCGs and he was looking for data to inform the strategy. There were people that got it more right than wrong and Westminster was a good place to start. He wanted to see officers going to Westminster and learning about what they had done. The Borough had a lot of residents that wanted the streets back. He was concerned that if the strategy was delayed by another month, it would negatively on the Council that it was not doing anything, but at the same time, the Council needed to be seen to be trying to get it right. Helen Price stated since it was announced the paper was to be split and was not going to Cabinet till March 2018, it left just three weeks to produce a new strategy. The Forum was now hearing the strategy needed to be reviewed and then there was the mention of hidden homeless, it was starting to look like the strategy would not be any further forward for at least nine months. She added the strategy should not look at the hidden homeless yet, and it should just focus on the rough sleepers for now. Councillor Bicknell stated compassion was a feeling; there were children in the borough that were parentless or in foster care, maybe Windsor's homeless needed some sort of foster family that could take them in and give them support and a helping hand. But, Helen Price was right, the borough needed to start moving quickly, to do nothing was condemning them to an early death and to do something could save lives.

Councillor Bowden stated street dwellers were using bus shelters outside banks. They were a security risk; he asked the police why they could not be moved and was told they had too many belongings. It was poor behaviour. Residents and businesses were fed up of street dwellers and their behaviour. The Council had tried to get Morrisons in the Town centre boarded up so the florist, that had a permit to trade there, could continue to sell her flowers but, the council did not own the land as it was private property and no one would take any action. He added that RBWM had established bus shelters for passengers and not for someone to sleep in all day. 50% of residents did not want to see them there and there were services available to help them. Sally Wright of the WHP confirmed 90% of the projects guests came from Windsor. Councillor Bowden stated action was needed not words. Action had to be taken, it had gone on for far too long. Marjory said she thought it had been a very positive meeting until Councillor Bowden had spoken. Michael he helped a homeless man himself but, if services had been available, he would not have needed to. Michael said there would be accommodation in Windsor for a night shelter and that would be a concrete proposal. Michael stated some resident just wanted street dwellers to go; maybe they lacked compassion. Real key provision such as a night shelter, if the provision was there, then the Council could ask them to move on reasonably. Councillor Quick wanted to reassure residents. She stated a few years ago, the Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships was put in charge of the Intensive Family Support Service which needed to evolve just like the homeless reduction strategy, and she was very confident that if the Head of Communities, Enforcement & Partnerships was looking after the strategy, it would help people get the right support; he was the best person to take it forward.

## TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

Paul Roach, Town Manager, gave a very brief update on activity and footfall for Windsor. The key points of his update included:

- Review of Christmas – the Town Centre did better than Christmas 2016. Footfall was down 6% despite the Town Manager presenting the largest Christmas programme to date. Specific events did very well.
- Footfall – declined since September 2017. January 2018 is still showing a decline but, last week, numbers had increased for the first time. The Town Manager feels the decline is due to a number of factors, such as the Lexicon opening in Bracknell, an increase in online shopping, car parking impacts etc.
- Some business had seen a higher basket increase but, unit vacancies stood at 5.9% but was still less than the national average.
- 10 new units opened but some had closed.
- Legoland had opened a pop-up shop in the old Fenwicks site which worked well, they would consider doing that again.
- Smaller unites looking likely to remain empty in Windsor Yards due to building works taking place.
- Car parking was just under 5% which mirrored footfall figures.
- There was two shopping centres in Windsor and both had marketing agents so, the Town Manager had been working with them to try and increase footfall in those areas.
- The Town Manager was looking at holding events to encourage people to visit the town.
- Wifi was launched in the Town and 38k people had registered to use it.

Helen Price stated to encourage residents into Windsor, the Town Manager should encourage people to use their advantage card for discounts and parking. The Chairman stated all the parking machines in the Town were getting their parking machines replaced so that they could accept the Advantage Cards. Councillor E. Wilson stated Paul Roach, the Town Manager was doing a fantastic job; his role was very hard in the current climate but, things were changing with business rates which should help reduce the empty shops. He requested a session at the next meeting where the Forum discussed the impact of what the Town Manager was doing to increase footfall in the Town Centre.

- ❖ **Action** – The Chairman to add an item on the next agenda to discuss the work carried out by the Town Manager and how that impacts the footfall figures for the Town.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 9.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....