

## CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman), Dr Lilly Evans, Mohammed Ilyas, Eileen Quick and Lynne Jones

Also in attendance: Councillors Jack Rankin, MJ Saunders, David Evans, Samantha Rayner and Claire Stretton, and Bill Higgins and Douglas Higgins (both London and Aberdeen)

Officers: Louise Freeth, Russell O'Keefe, David Scott, Andy Jeffs, Barbara Richardson and Andy Carswell

### APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Burbage and Clark.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meetings held on 5 December 2017, 22 November 2017 and 16 November 2017 were approved as a true and correct record.

### STREET DWELLING AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships informed Members that there had been a significant increase in reported antisocial behaviour over the last six months. Members were informed that this had been attributed to street dwellers; an increase in their number had also been noticed. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships stated that the Council was determined to provide solutions for street dwellers, acknowledging many of them suffered complex and difficult personal circumstances. These measures included emergency overnight accommodation and travel warrants, which meant that the Council was outstripping its minimum statutory responsibilities laid down by the SWEP. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships said that offers of temporary accommodation were frequently made, but these were not always accepted. Temporary accommodation was available in Windsor and Maidenhead, but the Council also used accommodation in Slough, Reading and Southall. Individuals would be supplied with a travel warrant to take them to these locations; in the event of needing to return to the Royal Borough in order to attend appointments or see family members, a return warrant would be issued.

Members were informed that Housing Options and the Council's Community Wardens had been speaking to homeless people in order to get a better understanding of their unique circumstances and assessing their needs. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships said that a multi-agency group had been developing a strategy, and it was hoped this strategy would be formally adopted after a report was considered by Cabinet on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Responding to a question from Cllr Quick, The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships said it was hoped the arrangements between the Council and Thames Valley Police regarding security concerns relating to street dwellers would be addressed in time for them to be included in the report to Cabinet, to ensure each party's responsibilities for enforcement.

Responding to a question from Cllr Jones, The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships said in most cases it was possible to identify a specific time and location for a report of antisocial behaviour, and in a number of instances it was possible to identify an individual perpetrator. However this was not always possible as sometimes there would be more than one person in the same location. There had been challenges in compiling the reports on antisocial behaviour as complaints were not always going to the right department. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships informed members that it was hoped the complaints process could be refined.

The Chairman asked about reports in national newspapers that claimed street dwellers were being housed in temporary accommodation in Southall containing rats. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships said officers had checked the accommodation in question and were satisfied that the reports were not accurate.

The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships clarified that if an offer of temporary accommodation was made, it would be applicable for that evening. There were no budget constraints that would prevent this from happening. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships said places would be found for everyone who wanted one on any given night. He added that of the known street dwellers in Windsor, there was a group of eight who had never accepted an offer of temporary accommodation. Of the main group of 14 known street dwellers in Windsor, six had been known to the Council for more than 12 months.

Members were informed that the Council had taken part in the annual Rough Sleeping Count on the night of November 1-2, where 11 street dwellers had been counted. Of those, nine were male and two female, and seven were sleeping in Windsor and four in Maidenhead. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships stated that that figure was likely to have increased since the survey was carried out. There were no street dwellers known to the Council in Ascot or the Sunnings. By way of comparison, the 2016 Rough Sleep Count had counted two people sleeping rough.

Cllr Saunders said it was important that the Council had an unambiguous policy on their requirements to deliver affordable and social housing to help combat the problem, especially as it was forcefully dealt with in the emerging Borough Local Plan. He also expressed his frustration at private developers not prioritising affordable and social housing.

Cllr Mrs Rayner stated that she was meeting the Windsor Homelessness Project later in the week to discuss ways the Council could help them. It was agreed that she would report back on the meeting at the next Panel.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships for his team's work on this project and asked if there was anything that Members could do to support it.

## UNIVERSAL CREDIT

The Head of Revenues and Benefits introduced the item and explained that a number of changes to Universal Credit had been announced in the Autumn Budget, which had meant the full roll-out for the service had been delayed from February to May 2018. She outlined some of the key changes, which included residents being able to make new claims for original benefits, such as Housing Benefit or Income Support, up until May 2018; free helplines being introduced; and increased Advances. Members were reminded that a Universal Credit briefing would take place on February 26<sup>th</sup>, which all were invited to attend.

Members were reminded that Universal Credit had been available in the Royal Borough since September 2015, and there had been 399 customers claiming the benefit since that date. Based on forecast figures provided by the DWP, it was anticipated that there would be 500 new Universal Credit claims made in the Royal Borough between May 2018 and the end of March 2019; of those, 68 were expected to come to the Council for additional assistance. The

Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that the Council would be liaising with the DWP in order for further briefing information to be given to staff and partners.

Cllr Ilyas noted that the report stated the Council had received £6,074 for 2017/18 as they had signed up to two new services but it was not known what would be provided for 2018/19; he asked if this had been factored into next year's budget. The Head of Revenues and Benefits said there was some provision in the budget for this, and it was expected that the funding to be provided would be lower than the 2017/18 figure.

Regarding the number of anticipated new claimants, The Head of Revenues and Benefits said the figure stated in section 3.10 of the report was based on a funding formula supplied by the DWP and was likely to be less.

Cllr Quick asked if any leaflets that clearly explained the changes to Universal Credit were available to residents. The Head of Revenues and Benefits said the DWP considered the roll-out to be their project that they should administer themselves, and any form of communication would need to be agreed by them. However information would be available on the Council's website. Cllr Mrs Rayner said it was planned to use libraries and mobile libraries as a means of informing residents about the changes to Universal Credit.

Responding to a question from Cllr Jones about the actual levels of risk associated with the roll-out compared to perception, The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that a higher level of risk had been identified from customers failing to engage with the DWP in the way they would be expected to. However these risks had been mitigated by the Council's budget. Cllr Saunders stated there was a significant gap between people's concerns about Universal Credit and its possible impacts, compared to a rational analysis of what the likely impacts would be.

Members were informed that the Council would continue to provide help for claimants for Council Tax Support and discretionary Housing Benefits. Other services would be incorporated into the Universal Credit. The Head of Revenues and Benefits said that claimants who did not have a change in their circumstances would not be affected by the roll-out to Universal Credit. The remaining claimants would be migrated across to the new benefit; however the Council had not yet received those details from the DWP. New benefits claimants would be directed towards the Universal Credit.

Members were informed that there had been no changes in the number of council staff assigned to handling benefits claims. There were fewer than 50 residents who were receiving additional benefits support from the Council.

## YORK HOUSE UPDATE

The Executive Director introduced the item and informed Members that the work that had been completed on the York House refurbishment was available to view at 2.7 of the report, and the programme of works still to be completed was at 2.8. Members were reminded that the refurbishment would allow for 28,000 square feet of improved office accommodation in Windsor.

The Chairman informed Members that he had been contacted by a resident, John Holland, who had expressed concerns about the refurbishment project. The Chairman invited Mr Holland to address the Panel. Mr Holland made the following points:

- Figures suggested a refurbishment would cost £1.8million and the creation of a second storey would cost £1.5million; however figures in a Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee report said the total cost was now £9.2million
- A different project had transpired, involving the demolition of large parts of the original building

- Requests to see the business case for the refurbishment had been rebuffed, with a Freedom of Information request deemed unreasonable. Mr Holland stated that there would have been nothing confidential in the business case
- At the last Windsor Town Forum it was stated that there was no business case
- The value of the existing building had been decreased in Council reports
- The refurbishment project did not represent value for money
- Money had been wasted on the feasibility study into sharing the site with Thames Valley Police

The Chairman explained that he had asked for the Cabinet paper on the York House update to be brought to Panel.

Cllr Rankin accepted that it had been unclear from the language used in the reports what the extent of the refurbishment would entail and it was not clear how much of the building would end up being demolished. He stated that, as ward Councillor, he had apologised to some residents. Cllr Rankin said political decisions had also contributed to the increased costs, as it had been felt that a Council facility that was on a par with Maidenhead Town Hall should be available for Windsor residents. Cllr Rankin also stated that the refurbishment would lead to an increase in the rental value of York House, and that Members had made statements relating to York House having seen the business case, which had not been critiqued by residents.

The Executive Director stated that it had always been planned that the project would be part refurbishment, part demolition, as this was the only way York House could be updated to suit officer and Member needs.

Cllr Saunders said that the internal configuration of York House had long been considered as not fit for purpose. Consideration had been given to moving to a different site, but it was felt prudent to retain a Council presence at York House. Cllr Saunders stated that Thames Valley Police had approached the Council with a view to sharing the building with their admin staff; however insurmountable operational difficulties emerged which led to them stepping away from the project. This had led to the current project, which was having to be funded entirely by the Council.

It was agreed that a meeting would be set up between the Executive Director, Cllr Rankin and Mr Holland to discuss the project and to answer the questions that Mr Holland had made in his letter to the Chairman. It was also agreed that all Members of the Panel would be able to see the written answers.

## YORK ROAD, MAIDENHEAD - SITE PROPOSAL

The Executive Director introduced the item and informed Members that the report set out the site proposals for York Road. Members were informed that the initial business plan for the site had been agreed by the Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee. Cllr David Evans highlighted that the figure in paragraph 2.7 of the report relating to social rent housing in the affordable tenure mix had been changed following consultations, and it was hoped that this would be a new benchmark for other sites across the Royal Borough.

Cllr Stretton informed Members that, following discussions with the Head of Law and Governance, it had been agreed that Paragraph 3.4.4 in the Part II report could be discussed in the public part of the meeting, as figures mentioned in the report had already been disclosed in public. Cllr Stretton reminded Members that it had been stated £650,000 was due to be spent on rejuvenating the Desborough Suite, following a meeting with arts groups in Maidenhead. However Cllr Stretton stated her belief that Paragraph 3.4.4 of the Part II report was not an accurate reflection of the meeting, which she had attended. Cllr Stretton circulated a report from Fourth Street about cultural and entertainment facilities in the Maidenhead area, along with her own report of the meeting, to Members.

Cllr Stretton said that the report from Fourth Street had been commissioned as part of the background study into the York Road opportunity area, but only one aspect of it had been included in the main report. Cllr Stretton said the conclusion from Fourth Street that a redesigned Desborough Suite could form the central focus point of a cultural quarter, with The Broadway being pedestrianised, had not been addressed in the main report. Cllr Stretton said this suggestion should have been put forward for discussion.

Regarding the figure of £650,000 which had been identified for a modest refurbishment of the Desborough Suite, Cllr Stretton stated there had been no analysis on what the money would be spent on. She also said that describing one of the options that meeting attendees were invited to vote on as 'a more modest level of investment' to improve the 'cosmetic appearance' of the Desborough Suite was inaccurate.

The Executive Director stated that the Fourth Street report had been taken into consideration when compiling the main report, in spite of it not being included as an appendix. Cllr Mrs Rayner stated that officers reporting back to her had come to the conclusion that a modest improvement of the Desborough Suite would be acceptable, and this was what the Council was looking to do. Cllr David Evans stated that the creation of a separate entrance onto the road, creation of a permanent bar/café facility and refurbishment of the stage area and dressing rooms had been proposed; Cllr Jones contended that this did not constitute a 'cosmetic' improvement. Cllr Saunders stated that it had been identified that enhancing the York Road area should revolve around an upgrade of the Desborough Suite, and that any work done to it should be meaningful rather than cosmetic. A figure of no more than £1.5million had been identified, which would afford the Desborough Suite greater flexibility in terms of which groups could use it and allow for it to become a separately contained unit from the Town Hall.

Cllr Stretton stated her belief that the report did not reflect the proposal that the regeneration of York Road amounted to the creation of a 'Cultural Quarter', and suggested that the paper should also have been considered by the Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Chairman asked how the issue of design creep would be avoided. The Executive Director reminded Members that the Council was the landowner of the site in question so retained a large amount of control over what happened to it. Furthermore, the Council was also the Planning Authority.

Responding to a question from Cllr Jones regarding the social rent aspect of the development, Cllr Saunders said the figure in the report provided the best balance to ensure delivery of the Area Action Plan. He stated the ratio was a meaningful one but not the full amount that was potentially available. Cllr Quick stated that the figures in the table at paragraph 2.7 of the report were sensible, but asked if the Council was doing its best to work with developers to encourage them to provide more affordable housing.

It was:

**RESOLVED: that the Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel considered the Cabinet Regeneration Sub-Committee report and approved the recommendations, subject to Full Council approval.**

(Cllr Jones abstained from voting. The motion was proposed by Cllr Quick and seconded by Cllr Dr Evans.)

## BROADWAY CAR PARK

The Managing Director of RBWM Property Company Ltd introduced the item and reminded Members that it had been agreed by the Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee to progress the redevelopment of the site as the owner using its own funds, or potentially with another

investor. An extension to the car park had been deemed not viable. The Managing Director of RBWM Property Company Ltd stated that due to the links with the neighbouring site, The Landings, it was fundamental to the regeneration and redevelopment of the town that a joined-up approach to the redevelopment of both sites was necessary. A development brief for the project was agreed in July 2017.

Members were informed that in November development management firm London and Aberdeen presented a draft investment case to the Council. A full review of this was carried out to ensure the works scheme was financially viable, and could be delivered within budget and to a good quality standard. The review and subsequent discussions led to three alternative options to be considered for the Broadway Car Park, which were set out in detail to Members in Part II of the report. The Managing Director of RBWM Property Company Ltd informed Members that the retail function of Option 1 had been removed but the requirement for office space had been retained, while Option 2 had no retail or office. Members were informed that Option 3 was considered most conducive to development of the town centre, but it could not be discussed in Part I as it was commercially sensitive due to third party involvement.

Bill Higgins, on behalf of London and Aberdeen, informed Members that the firm had employed planning and development teams to ensure delivery of the Stage 2 design, which included 1,533 car parking spaces compared to the 750 that already existed. He stated that this design was within the costs and had met the objectives that had been set, and stated his belief that L&A had exceeded the targets that they had been set. Mr Higgins stated that the possibility of moving Shopmobility down to the ground had been identified if retail and/or office space was included in the design. Members were informed that discussions between the owners of The Landings and the shopping centre were ongoing, as access to Central House would be crucial as it had been identified as a focal point to the project.

Mr Higgins stated his belief that Option 1 was the optimum scheme that should be considered, and stated his belief that Option 2 would result in a worse experience for customers. The Managing Director of RBWM Property Company Ltd reminded Members that the specification and design principles of all three options was the same and had been taken from the work undertaken by Allies and Morrison Architects. Cllr David Evans informed Members that he would not be asking for approval of the Capital Budget when the report went to the Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee.

Mr Higgins stated his disappointment that, as he understood it, the progress of the two options being considered required the involvement of another partner or development manager.

It was:

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel considered the Cabinet Regeneration Sub-Committee report and approved the following recommendations:**

- a. Approves that further work be undertaken to conclude Option 3 set out in the Part 2 report
- b. Delegate authority to the Executive Director in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Maidenhead Regeneration and Maidenhead and in conjunction with the Lead Member for Finance to negotiate and implement an agreement for Option 3
- c. If Option 3 proves through negotiation to not be deliverable, to progress Option 2 through a procurement process to be agreed
- d. Finalise a capital budget recommendation for the approval of Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee and Full Council
- e. Asks Full Council to approve these recommendations, or to bring back to the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel for further discussion.

(The motion was proposed by Cllr Dr Evans and seconded by Cllr Jones.)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** To approve the motion.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 9.25 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....