

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM

THURSDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Gerry Clark, Judith Diment and Shamsul Shelim

Also in attendance: Kristie Hayward, Jemima Rellie, Don Yates, Steve Harris, Alex Vander Borght, Karl Wilson, Patrick O'Hagan and George Roberts.

Officers: Wendy Binmore, Louisa Dean, David Scott and Julia White.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Councillor Gerry Clark be appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Rayner, Grey and Pryer, Richard Poad, Alan Mellins, Mark Persad, Amanda Bryett, Sunil Kalia, Graham and Ed Lumley, Max Roberts, Peter Langthorne and Rebecca Sparrow.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2018 be approved.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

PLANS FOR THE ROYAL WEDDING

David Scott, Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships stated the upcoming wedding was the second royal wedding of the year and his team were intending on writing to businesses and residents in the next week regarding details of the day when they were released. The date was well known but, the timings were not confirmed and the Palace formally announced there would be a carriage procession round Windsor Castle and along the High Street. It was expected the procession would take a similar route to the guard change route so there would be no more disruption than when the Changing of the Guard took place.

Visitor numbers were unknown at that point as there was not quite as much interest in the second royal wedding as there had been for the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's wedding. Any road closures would be similar to those of the Changing of the Guard and the route of the procession would have barriers but, there would be no fixed screens or media positions. There would be some media presence but nowhere near

as much as there was for Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding. Thames Valley Police (TVP) were to make visits to houses along the route and distribute leaflets that detailed the security arrangements. The final details of the wedding were due to be released on Monday 17 September. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships confirmed he could not comment on the possibility on different routes for the procession.

Councillor Diment said the procession through Town was to cost £2m in security. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships responded he did not believe that the costs would be the responsibility of the Borough and any costs incurred by the Borough would be forwarded onto the Royal Household.

The Chairman queried if there would be an increase in footfall for the Town. The Communications and Marketing Manager confirmed the Communications Team had received one media enquiry, and this wedding was very different from the royal wedding in May 2018 with much less media interest. There was likely to be some disruption to businesses but, nothing like what was seen earlier in the year. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships stated once the procession route had been finalised, the Borough would have a better idea on numbers, logistics and transport. The wedding was being held on a Friday so there would be less people available to visit than on a Saturday.

UPDATE ON THE HOMELESSNESS SITUATION IN WINDSOR

The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships explained a new report was heading to Cabinet in September 2018 that sought approval for the new Homelessness Strategy. It sought to support the homeless before enforcement action was taken. He added the Borough would always aim to provide support and care to vulnerable individuals, and a lot of work had been done since the royal wedding in May 2018 to support people and the Borough had had a number of successes to date.

The bus stops in the Town Centre were no longer occupied and assistance had been offered that was suitable to the individuals needs such as accommodation, psychological support and substance misuse services. The Council had worked with TVP in partnership to help tackle the issues. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships said there was no magic wand and many of the instances found in Windsor were similar across the country.

The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships explained the Borough had extended Community Warden teams who tried to keep an eye on individual needs. MEAM Coordinators were introduced to provide intensive support which helped ensure individuals received the interventions they needed. Some people could be homeless for some time, so might not be able to settle straight back into tenancy arrangements, and those people would be supported. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships added fixed penalty notices for street drinking would be introduced to help fill the gap to cover antisocial behaviour.

Members of the Forum noted there had been instances of tents in Goswells and that had been dealt with and there had been a report of another tent by a memorial in the same area and the Borough was supporting that individual. Legislation around litter being thrown from vehicles had not been adopted so the Cabinet report dealt with that also which meant the Borough's housekeeping was up to date. A report was due to go

to a joint committee of the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Planning and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Chairman stated it illustrated the complexity of the problem and the offer of targeted appropriate help was the Boroughs objective. Antisocial behaviour that took place made it a difficult balance but, hopefully by dealing the situation by offering support, that would help reduce the antisocial behaviour. The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships said a donation scheme would be set up so that people could be sure their donation was going to the right people in the right way.

The Chairman stated having seen homelessness issues spread from London to the outskirts of London, the paper is very welcome to get people the help they needed. Councillor Diment said it was great to see progress made and all options explored. It was a very complex problem and it needed cooperation of the individuals to move forward, but she welcomed the report.

UPDATE ON THE ONE-WAY SYSTEM AND INCREASED TRAFFIC ISSUES IN WINDSOR

The Head of Commissioning was unable to attend, therefore the Visitor Manager read out a statement from the Head of Commissioning regarding the update on the one-way system and increased traffic issues in Windsor which read:

“The one-way system around Thames Street; Thames Avenue and Datchet Road had now been made into a permanent scheme and works were substantially complete. Whilst there was not total support for the scheme, comments which were received during the ‘trial’ period had been understood and mitigated as far as possible. Future phases would improve the traffic signals and pedestrian crossings at Datchet Road when crossing from the Windsor Town bridge area into the Town Centre.

In addition, there was a broader project for Windsor to install permanent hostile vehicle mitigations which was being led by David Scott. That project had reviewed the current temporary measures which were to be replaced with permanent measures (For information: Cabinet were scheduled to receive a report on 27th September 2018 relating to the hostile vehicle mitigation).

In the context of the Thames Street area (around Theatre Royal) this would enable further improvements to the one-way scheme which would address some of the outstanding concerns (for example: minor modifications to the junction of River Street and Thames Avenue to reduce congestion from queuing traffic.

There had been long-standing discussions concerning the area around the Castle and improving conditions for pedestrians and visitors which included potential pedestrianisation or limiting access to certain vehicles for specific periods of the day, similar in nature to how the lower end of Peascod Street was managed. There was no agreed solution or funding to deliver those improvements but discussions were to be continued with Members; businesses and through other Forums to ensure that it remained on the agenda.

As the Forum would expect it was not an easy or simple ‘fix’ which suited all users (including pedestrians; business; taxi’s; deliveries and buses) and was deliverable, hence the ongoing discussions. The broader area would also be influenced by the

installation of the permanent hostile vehicle measures which were scheduled to begin installation in Summer 2019.

David Scott, Head of Communities Enforcement and Partnerships, stated a Hostile Vehicle Measures (HVM) Report was scheduled to go to Cabinet. The project followed the deployment of temporary measures which had been modified twice since being installed following the attacks at Westminster. HVMs had been added to St Albans Street and Castle Hill was added following further attacks around Europe to provide safer areas for large groups queuing to enter the Castle.

Thames Valley Police (TVP) commissioned a feasibility study and the Borough had commissioned more detailed design work for the permanent measures. The measures could be used during busy periods, state and ceremonial events.

What had been learned from the design process was that some locations were very difficult to implement the measures due to what was underground in those locations. The integrated measures were serious engineering feats and more work was ongoing to achieve the level of safety desired. The Head of Communities Enforcement and Partnerships continued the market continued to evolve regarding the look of the gate style measures, while the integrated styles were much more sympathetic to the Windsor setting.

The Head of Communities Enforcement and Partnerships stated there would be a phased implementation of the HVMs. Phase one would cover the areas currently protected with some changes. The Theatre and River Street points were to be merged to just one HVM point. The Borough was also looking at using a different approach to Castle Hill and St Albans Street to alleviate the lack of space when visitors queued, as when there were queues for the Castle, people then walked in the road. There was more feasibility work to be completed.

The Head of Communities Enforcement and Partnerships confirmed the Borough was still pursuing the Home Office for help with costs but, there was support in place from TVP. Following trial digs, possibly around Christmas 2018, then design work would be required. But there was a limited market for materials. The design works were scheduled to be finished in Spring 2019 and works were due to begin in Summer 2019. The temporary measures would remain in place till the new measures were installed.

The Chairman stated disruption being kept to a minimum would be appreciated. The Head of Communities Enforcement and Partnerships said the Borough would try very hard not to disrupt any businesses. He also confirmed the report would be going to Cabinet for authorisation to spend with phase one of the works costing approximately £950k.

INCREASED VISITOR FOOTFALL TO WINDSOR CASTLE AND ASSOCIATED QUEUES

Julia White, Visitor Manager stated Windsor Castle had seen an increase in visitor numbers for 2018, and Councillor C. Rayner had some concerns regarding the length of queues and waiting times to go round the Castle.

Jemima Rellie, Royal Collection Trust explained the queues themselves had a dedicated team to manage and coordinate visitors. The team monitored when people

joined the queue and how long it took them to get in and around the Castle. Members of the dedicated team went up and down the lines to talk to visitors.

The Castle encouraged visitors to book tickets in advance and also asked people to arrive later in the day to avoid the early rush. The Castle also opened its doors to visitors a little earlier than usual to alleviate queues.

The Royal Collection Trust trialled different techniques to see what worked and what needed to be managed to reduce queuing, pushing pre-booked tickets to guarantee entry. The team were working on building in solutions to keep the queues to a minimum with wider conversations being had on how to manage the queues moving forward.

The Castle provided different entrances for pre-booked tickets and wardens helped people to find the right entrances. Online pre-booked tickets was going well but, security screening was the biggest bottleneck for the Castle so the team were exploring installing extra scanners and other ways of minimising the length of queues. Jemima Rellie added the Royal Collection Trust was continually reviewing the situation.

In response to questions from Members, Jemima Rellie confirmed there were no set pre-booked time slots to use their tickets but, she said they encouraged people to come later to avoid the early rush.

ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

The Chairman requested officers to email Members that had attended the Tourism Development Forum over the last 12 months and ask them individually what time works for them when scheduling the Forum meetings. He would also ask them to send any suggestions that could be added to the agenda for future meetings.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the future meeting dates details.

The meeting, which began at 3.00 pm, finished at 4.20pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....