

INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2020

PRESENT: Councillors Gurpreet Bhangra (Chairman), Mandy Brar, Wisdom Da Costa, Phil Haseler (Vice-Chairman) and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance: Councillors Cannon, Johnson, Rayner, Stimpson, Clark, Hilton, Werner.

Officers: Duncan Sharkey, Ben Smith, Alan Abrahamson and David Cook.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

MINUTES

Resolved unanimously: that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

BUDGET 2020/21

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

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

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

Cllr Clark, Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure, informed the Panel that with regards to bus subsidies he had found out that some subsidies that the council were paying for a journey were more than the cost of a full ticket so savings were possible, there were also subsidised large buses doing rounds that were often not used that would be better served with smaller buses and services that met public need. There were also plans to look at the possibility of having electric buses, although this was for future years.

Cllr Stimson, Lead Member for Environmental Services, Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside, informed the Panel that she was currently working on a climate change strategy and this would include looking at garden waste. With regards to the cost it was planned to bring costs in line with other authorities, especially as council tax was so low. Even

with the increase, paying £2.50 for garden waste collection was excellent value for money and better than having to drive to a recycling centre.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Panel noted the proposed budget report.

Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Panel considered the report that provided a quarterly oversight of a range of performance measures that came under the Panels remit and supported the Council Plan.

The Managing Director informed the Panel that appendix A set out the Q2 Performance Report for all measures relating to the Panel's remit, and included performance commentary, related business intelligence and an overview of achievements and key milestones reached for the period July – September 2019. Footfall in Windsor and Maidenhead remained a concern, however this was a national issue.

Cllr W Da Costa asked what was being done regarding the drop in footfall, that with regards to homeliness the indicator was performing well but asked what the figure of 14 related to and with regards to pot holes should road satisfaction also be included. In response the Panel were informed that with regards to pot holes this related to holes that were reported with regards to satisfaction this would come from an annual satisfaction survey that is carried out on condition and cleanliness, the borough was above average. With regards to footfall Maidenhead would be affected by regeneration work but there would be long term benefits. Windsor's footfall figures had been distorted due to high profile events such as the Royal Wedding. Both of the borough town centre managers worked hard with stakeholders on events to keep our highstreets vibrant. With regards to homeliness the indicator had changed since last quarter and it would help if the number of presentations that received help was shown.

Resolved unanimously: that the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the report and:

- i) Notes the 2019/20 Q2 Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Report in Appendix A.**
- ii) Requests relevant Lead Members, Directors and Heads of Service to maintain focus on improving performance.**

WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman introduced the Panel's work programme and informed Members that this was an opportunity to identify any areas they wished to add to the work programme. Members were informed that we were adding an additional meeting to consider items held over from this meeting so they could discuss the Budget. The task & finish group (T&FG) would need to produce their final recommendations so another meeting of the T&FG may be required.

Cllr Da Costa mentioned that with regards to the Homelessness T&FG he had been asked by another Cllr who attends to raise the following concerns. There was a lack of progress, lack of adherence to the TOR, lack of minute taking (it was noted that minutes were not taken for T&FG just actions and supporting notes), lack of review of best practice in other boroughs, exclusion of the Brett Foundation, who are a key stakeholders and a lack of meetings. The Chairman said that he would review the concerns raised.

The Chairman said that the Panel were also asked to produce an Annual Report that would be considered by Council in June 2020. This was an opportunity for the Panel to say what they felt had gone well and to proposed improvements. Appendix A had been attached to show analysis of the recent member survey on scrutiny to help in deliberations.

As Panel Members had no suggestions to add to the report the Chairman suggested that it be brought back to their next meeting. Members were asked to consider what they wished to add.

The Panel noted the work programme.

The meeting, which began at 7.30 pm, finished at 9.30 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....