

INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2021

PRESENT: Councillors John Baldwin, Christine Bateson, Jon Davey (Vice-Chairman), Phil Haseler and Sayonara Luxton (Chairman)

Also in attendance: Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra, Councillor John Bowden, Councillor Mandy Brar, Councillor David Cannon, Councillor Gerry Clark, Councillor David Coppinger, Councillor Carole Da Costa, Councillor Karen Davies, Councillor David Hilton, Councillor Maureen Hunt, Councillor Andrew Johnson, Councillor Lynne Jones, Councillor Ewan Larcombe, Councillor Ross McWilliams, Councillor Helen Price, Councillor Samantha Rayner, Councillor Shamsul Shelim, Councillor Gurch Singh, Councillor Donna Stimson, Councillor Helen Taylor, Councillor Amy Tisi and Councillor Simon Werner

Officers: Emma Congerton, Simon Dale, Tim Golabek, Tracy Hendren, Chris Joyce, Fatima Rehman, Adele Taylor, Andrew Vallance and Adrien Waite

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the order of business as detailed in the agenda be varied.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Baldwin nominated The Vice Chairman to be Chairman and was seconded by the Vice Chairman. A named vote was taken.

Appointment of Councillor Davey as Chairman (Motion)	
Councillor John Baldwin	For
Councillor Christine Bateson	Against
Councillor Jon Davey	For
Councillor Phil Haseler	Against
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	Against
Rejected	

This motion fell. A second motion was put forward by Councillor Haseler, who nominated Councillor Luxton to be Chairman and was seconded by Councillor Bateson. A named vote was taken.

Appointment of Councillor Luxton as Chairman (Motion)	
Councillor John Baldwin	Abstain
Councillor Christine Bateson	For
Councillor Jon Davey	Abstain
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	For
Carried	

This motion was carried.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Baldwin declared a financial interest, as he had a property on Shoppenhangers Road. He was attending the meeting with an open mind.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the order of business as detailed in the agenda be varied.

ACTIVE TRAVEL MEASURES

Although the report had not been included on the Agenda at time of publication, the Chairman agreed to consider it as an urgent item, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 because the consultation was due to end on 9 February 2021.

Kevin Chapman, public speaker, said the proposed schemes were not required and were not a good use of money as traffic cutting was not a major concern. He felt the consultation process was flawed and leaflets needed to be sent to ensure elderly residents who did not have access to the internet were engaged. He felt the proposals led to a loss of diversion routes for traffic, should a major incident occur on Dedworth Road or Maidenhead Road. The schemes were unpopular with residents and similar works in other authorities were being removed due to vandalism and maintenance costs.

Susy Shearer, Secretary of Windsor and Maidenhead Cycling Action Group and former members of the RBWM Cycle Forum, said she hoped for officers to review discussions on 'Nextdoor' on the proposal. She addressed the constraints of the consultation due to COVID-19 that led to a restricted reach to residents.

Councillor Baldwin said the proposals for this tranche of funding had a short consultation timeline and the proposal was radically different to what was discussed, including half the amount of the original bid of funding and change of approach. The proposals were based on the best way to spend the money, which seemed injurious to the movement of traffic. It was suggested to either change the consultation period or withdraw the proposals. He said the consultation only provided yes and no responses, which limited the respondent in explaining their views.

Councillor Clark, Lead Member Transport and Infrastructure, said the proposed schemes were developed in accordance to the government's guideline to a modal filter and propensity to cycle. The consultation was to decipher the appetite for the schemes.

Councillor Haseler questioned how meaningful the consultation was, given residents not on social media were uninformed. He asked if Royal Mail could deliver consultation leaflets, with the costs covered by the government tranche.

The Vice Chairman said councillors were not advised of changes to the scheme and asked why the information was only released recently. The expansion of the scheme to cover the rest of Clewer and Dedworth, where there were not severe traffic congestion concerns, was unfair.

Chris Joyce, Head of Infrastructure, Sustainability and Economic Growth, said the Tranche 2 funding from the Department of Transport started in Summer 2020, which required local authorities to work at pace. Officers met with councillors to inform, gain feedback and help develop the schemes, and further information was provided in August 2020 to affected ward councillors. The purpose of the consultation was to gain feedback on the schemes and would only be taken forward if there was support for the scheme, with consideration to amendments at pace.

Councillor Jones, Old Windsor, said a part of her ward was affected and she was not informed. Residents queried why school street schemes were applied to streets that were not used for school access. She asked how the consultation was approved to be published without going through ward councillors and Infrastructure O&S first.

Councillor Hunt, Hurley and Walthams, said she was concerned about the lack of ward councillor knowledge of the proposals. The bus gate in Shoppenhangers Road was a concern for her ward residents, as it was the main arterial route for them to enter Maidenhead.

Councillor Tisi, Clewer East, said the final schemes proposed for public consultation were different from what was originally reviewed. It was suggested to have virtual village hall event to allow residents to drop-in and ask questions about the scheme. Chris Joyce said he would investigate the option for a virtual town hall setup.

Prior to the meeting, Councillor Haseler emailed three local schools in Cox Green to ask if they were aware of the consultation, to which they were not, and was informed this was due to a delay with Project Centre. Councillor Haseler asked who the decision makers were for the approval of schemes and the Panel was informed this was officers in consultation with the lead member, and the feedback could be brought to the O&S Panel.

Councillor Clark said he would be happy for officers to send questionnaires to a representative number of residents who do not have access to the internet to share their views on the schemes.

The Panel noted the item.

BUDGET 2021/22 REPORT

Councillor Hilton, Lead Member Finance and Ascot, introduced the item and invited the Panel to make comments on the proposed budget. The Panel was informed that they would only be considering areas that came under the Panels remit, and other O&S Panels were also being asked to comment on the budget prior to the report going to Cabinet and then Council to approve.

The Vice Chairman asked how the estimated pressure on reduced car parking income of £2.07mn was estimated and what the impact of this reduction would have on the parking service. Councillor Cannon, Lead Member Public Protection and Parking, said the estimated projection was based on the usage of car parks and analysis of existing

data from the support service. The budget was balanced in anticipation of not incurring £2.07mn.

Simon Dale, interim Head of Highways, said the estimated pressure figure was determined between service leads and accountants by reviewing the impact of lockdown restrictions on each parking facility. The loss of parking control notice income and pay-and-display effected the income. If the loss of income would be replenished from within the budget, plans to maintain car parks and provide a good parking service would continue.

Adele Taylor, Director of Resources, said the budget was balanced through ongoing funding and one-off funding due to the COVID-19 pressures. There was approximately £9mn worth of savings in the medium-term financial plan and £9mn of COVID-19 growth, funded through one-off sources for the financial year 2021/22. The budget showed the assumption of income expected to be given by central government through schemes such as the Sales Fees and Charges compensation scheme.

Councillor Jones asked how temporary the loss of parking income through regeneration would be and the Panel was informed that car parks were being closed and rebuilt, which would lead to a predicted loss of £440,000 income for this financial year. Each financial year would be looked in isolation.

Councillor Rayner, Deputy Leader of the Council, Resident and Leisure Services, HR, IT, Legal, Performance Management and Windsor, informed the Panel that reduced tourism was significantly impacted by COVID-19. It was projected that there would be a loss of £60,000 from the Tourist Information Centre by the loss of ticket sales, membership fees and advertising.

Councillor Baldwin asked for reassurance that conversations regarding the possibility of residents being allowed 30 minutes free parking and private park car parks would continue and be taken into consideration during the consultation. Councillor Cannon said views from Councillors and residents would be considered.

Councillor Baldwin asked for the evidence for moving from a fixed interval pattern to a targeted street cleansing pattern. Councillor Clark said the evidence was based on officer knowledge and cleaning would take place when necessary. If the service was not delivered to the current standard, contractors could be sent out for further street cleansing.

Regarding the review of council's rural car parks, Councillor Hunt said she and residents had concerns of the rural car park at the dead end of Hurley. The streets were narrow, there was the potential of displacement for parking on street and emergency services found it difficult to reach the area due to the river at the dead end. Councillor Cannon said residents and ward councillors were encouraged to bring forth their views in writing.

Councillor Werner asked what the criteria and evidence was used to select rural car parks, how much income would be made and how the possible influx of cars being parked on streets instead of car parks would be managed. As a result, the target income would not be reached, and residential areas would have a high volume of cars.

Councillor Cannon said the criteria was for all council car parks that were not charged by Traffic Regulation Orders. The evidence was based on officer's local knowledge and experience, and the projection of car park usage helped assist the estimated income. He was aware of the potential displacement of cars and the impact this would have on enforcement, which was considered during calculations. The parking charges were lower than town centre pricing.

The Vice Chairman suggested for each car park to be listed under the online car parking consultation page, as there was currently no listing. The Panel was informed that the suggestion would be discussed with Simon Dale, and the proposals for car parks was part of the budget consultation.

Councillor Coppinger said there was a vacancy for the last 3 months in the Planning Support Team, which was not replaced as the team had managed without this. Councillor Jones asked if there would be a reduction in the service provided due to the lack of additional officer due to a reduced number of planning applications. Adrien Waite, Head of Planning, said the frequency of planning applications had recovered quickly after the first lockdown. He was confident the vacancy was not needed to be filled due to the efficiency changes made to adapt to working from home.

The Panel was informed that Councillor Stimson, Lead Member Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside, was now the Lead Member on reshaping the trees function instead of Councillor Coppinger.

The Vice Chairman asked if the tree team would be able to cope with the savings, given recent planning applications had increased environmental pressures and tree queries. Councillor Stimson informed the Panel that the tree officers were both in Communities and Planning services, and the head of services were evaluating how best to function between them. Adrien Waite had a background in sustainability, which was beneficial to retain and protect trees, with plans to have greener properties.

Councillor Baldwin asked if the highway tree maintenance and inspection would be impacted by reshaping the trees function, and the Panel was informed that an update on the tree strategy was due. As trees were expensive, their maintenance was needed.

The Vice Chairman asked if the skills in other departments allowed for the reductions of staff elsewhere, and Chris Joyce, Head of Infrastructure, Sustainability and Transport, said the tree team within the planning service would focus on planning application, whilst the sustainability team would look at biodiversity, delivering additional trees and green infrastructure.

The Vice Chairman asked if there was an opportunity to sell services from the expertise of officers to neighbouring boroughs to generate income, and the Panel was informed this could be considered in future.

The Vice Chairman asked if the appendices could show the quantity of units sold in Appendix D and the revenue created, and the Panel was informed this could be considered for future budget proposals.

Councillor Baldwin asked if there could be a rise in percentage increase for the removal of illegal signage and a fall in the percentage increase for business signs, to assist in the business recovery plan. Simon Dale said he would investigate this.

Chris Joyce said the funding for major schemes within the Capital Programme was identified to ensure a pipeline of schemes with funding was available, as spending money on the early stage of development resulted in better schemes.

Councillor Baldwin asked where the identified income of £160,000 came from, and the Panel was informed this was received from Community Infrastructure Levy, grant funding and Section 106.

Councillor Brar asked why the Cookham Bridge Refurbishment & Structural Repair was nil when there was money assigned to the bridge, and the Panel was informed that the budget illustrated new amounts, not the amount that was already existing in the Capital Programme.

Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Chris Joyce introduced the quarterly performance report and said 6 target measures had been achieved, 1 measure was near target and 1 measure was a non-targeted performance for Q2.

Councillor Bateson congratulated the lead officers for reaching many of the targeted measures. The Vice Chairman said the borough at large needed to invest in initiatives to increase the salary for women.

Councillor Baldwin raised his concerns about the financial constraints on the Transportation Strategy in engaging community groups to deliver services that were vital to the wellbeing of the residents. He asked if there were any pressures and which voluntary groups would be affected.

Duncan Sharkey said the pressures included reduced engagement with the community due to lockdown restrictions and the unknown longer-term effects of COVID-19 on organisations. The borough was providing grant funding to organisations. Currently, assumptions could only be made about the impacts.

Councillor Baldwin asked for reassurance that there would be a maintained supply of PPE to voluntary organisations and asked if this was dependent on central government funding or the local authorities' resources. Duncan Sharkey said there was a government system for PPE delivery for targeted social care, the NHS and key public sector providers to access. Research showed there was accessibility to PPE.

Councillor Stimson said Baroness Barran, appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, was looking at the possibility of a new social covenant for volunteers, and the borough was in line to be a pilot area for the project.

The Panel noted the item.

INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN

Chris Joyce introduced the item and said the full infrastructure delivery plan report was prepared in January 2018 to show the infrastructure requirements as part of borough local plan (BLP) and reviewed in October 2019, following changes to the BLP. There were no substantial changes to the projects.

The schedule of projects was updated based on the prioritisation methodology; high, medium and low priority. The spreadsheet schedule was not published on a regular basis, but the status of the projects was regularly updated by the team.

Councillor Larcombe said the estimated total scheme value of £302mn was incorrect and said the funding gap figure was not given. Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury were only verbally informed of that Channel 1 was no longer progressing and Wraysbury Parish Council had raised a petition. He said the council had not given an opportunity to consider the River Thames Scheme since 2017 and there was a lack of transparency regarding the scheme. Chris Joyce said changes to the published report could not be changes and future reports would reflect the correct information.

The Vice Chairman suggested a regularly updated live online version of the reports and the Panel was informed that the schedule of projects could be made into a live document that could be reported to the Panel.

Councillor Baldwin asked for progress on actions agreed on the Wraysbury Drain site visit, and the Panel was informed that the relevant information would be passed to the Chairman offline.

Councillor Bateson said ward councillors previously received notifications on the installation of telecommunication aerials in their ward, and Chris Joyce said this would be reviewed offline.

The Panel noted the item.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROCESSES

Chris Joyce introduced the item and said the report covered the capital programme and how the programme was put together, its guiding principles, how officers put together the schemes and how it was approved by Council. Annually, a call for bids were made, which were shaped into proposals by directorate and prioritised in relation to how they deliver against the corporate priorities. The report provided foundational information, to allow Members to be better informed for future items on the Work Programme.

The Panel noted the item.

HOUSING STRATEGY

Councillor McWilliams, Lead Member for Housing, Communications and Youth Engagement, introduced the item and said a consultation for the first new Housing Strategy was being undertaken. The Strategy looked at the housing market the borough could deliver and aimed for more affordable rented products

Emma Congerton, Housing Service Manager, said the public consultation was open until 3 February 2020. The Housing Strategy was centred around three key themes; deliver new homes, promote health and wellbeing and support vulnerable residents to obtain and sustain appropriate accommodation,

Councillor Haseler said in planning applications, developers claimed they could not provide affordable housing due to viability issues and hoped for a way to provide more

affordable housing. The Panel was informed that there was now an Enabling Officer that would look help drive up affordable and socially rented units.

Councillor Haseler said the gypsy and traveller community in Cox Green was reluctant to evict themselves from parks under section 61, which led to anti-social behaviour. He asked on the progress regarding this matter and the Panel was informed that the strategy would review this concern and find solutions.

ACTION: Housing to review gypsy and traveller community accommodation provision in the borough within the housing strategy, to include consideration of the issues raised.

Councillor Bateson asked if homeless and rough sleepers were given temporary accommodation if they did not live in the borough. Tracy Hendren, Head of Housing and Environmental Health, said they would be referred to the local authority where the duty was owed, and it would be ensured they received the appropriate service. Some households were in temporary accommodation outside of the borough and there were efforts to bring them back in the borough. Last year, households in the borough was 30%, which was now 50% this year.

Councillor Baldwin asked if the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) would be revisited as the policy was adapted and the Panel was informed it would be. The Vice Chairman said there was a need for coaching and training regarding the EQIA and the Panel was informed there was a new equality position who would consider this.

The Panel noted the item.

ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT - DRAFT

The clerk informed the Panel that the draft annual scrutiny report was required by April 2021, with a final version ready for to go to Full Council by June 2021. Councillor Haseler said he was a new Panel Member and inference was needed to be made from the minutes to add comments. The Chairman suggested the item to be taken offline and comments to be made via email.

WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Baldwin said the Work Programme needed to be decluttered, with a focus on what was on the Forward Plan. He said the meetings had become an update from officers, which Members should do prior to the meeting.

The Vice Chairman said he provided his suggestions for the Work Programme to the previous Chairman offline and received no feedback.

Councillors Bateson and Baldwin said with the change in Panel membership, the Panel should have the opportunity to add and remove items on the Programme, to accommodate to the Members interest.

ACTION: Chairman and Vice Chairman to review the Work Programme, with the Panel Members input.

The meeting, which began at 6.18 pm, finished at 9.32 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....