

WINDSOR TOWN FORUM

WEDNESDAY, 24 MARCH 2021

PRESENT: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Samantha Rayner (Vice-Chairman), Jon Davey, Karen Davies, Neil Knowles, Helen Price, Shamsul Shelim, Amy Tisi, David Hilton, Gary Muir and David Coppinger

Also in attendance: John Webb, Sergeant Catherine Griffiths, Richard Endacott, Claire Milne, Alison Carpenter and Susy Shearer

Officers: Fatima Rehman, Paul Roach, David Scott, Karen Shepherd, Louise Freeth, Suzanne Martin, Julia White and Angela Huisman

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Cannon and Bateson, and Councillors Muir and Coppinger substituted respectively.

Councillor Knowles requested a minutes' silence, which was observed in memory of Sergeant Gavin Hillier from the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards, who was killed in training. The Vice Chairman wrote to the Commanding Officer to relay the borough's condolences.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Although no formal declarations of interest were declared, it was noted that Councillors Shelim, Davies, Hilton and Knowles were Members of the Community Governance Review (CGR) Working Group. The Vice Chairman commented that she was the Lead Member for Windsor and libraries, and the Chairman commented that he was the Chairman of the Windsor, Eton, and Ascot Town Partnership, but had no financial interest.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021 be approved, subject to the following changes in the former minutes:

- "Councillor Hilton said that the WNP would have no weight in the planning process until it was adopted as a Neighbourhood Plan after the referendum. Adrien Waite said that once a formal notice to proceed to referendum was given, the WNP had a degree of weight in the planning process."
- "Claire Milne said special regulations ensured that any Neighbourhood Plans that had been delayed due to COVID-19 and had not been through the referendum were still given some weight in the planning process. Therefore, the decision notice was important."
- "Councillor Davey said the posters put up to reach residents who were impacted by the low traffic neighbourhood consultation were removed. The posters were paid by the council and those who removed them would be prosecuted."

The Chairman informed Members of progress on actions arising from the previous minutes:

ACTION FROM LAST MEETING	UPDATE
Sue Fox to inform Councillor Davey of the grant size for home charging point for electric cars.	Councillor Davey was in conversation with Tim Golabek, Service Lead - Transport and Infrastructure.
David Scott to inform Councillor Davey of the record of death of a COVID-19 positive due to an unrelated cause offline.	David Scott emailed Councillor Davey with a response.
Inspector Tracey Croucher to share the number of FPNs and COVID-19 related incidents in Windsor offline.	Between 19 January and 16 March 2021, 91 Fixed Penalties Notices were issued during that time.
My Royal Borough to focus on businesses outside of Windsor town centre.	Completed.
Written reports going forward to focus on businesses from outside of central Windsor.	Completed.
Neil Walter to liaise with Chris Pearse, Head of Capital Projects and Asset Management, on changing the public parking time at York House.	Chris Pearse said the borough was unable to change the car parking times at York House.
Neil Walter to explore the resident season ticket potential and update the Forum through the Lead Member.	A potential resident season ticket would be reviewed, and conclusions would be reported back later in 2021.
Neil Walter to ask Chris Joyce to provide an update on the car share scheme and update the link in the Strategy.	Councillor Tisi to directly liaise with Chris Joyce, Head of Infrastructure, Sustainability and Economic Growth, offline.
Neil Walter to change the 'Cycle Action Plan' to 'Cycling Action Plan'.	Completed and would be updated on the public website in due course.
Adrien Waite to issue the decision notice for Windsor Neighbourhood Plan (WNP).	Completed; the plan was due to go to referendum on 6 May 2021.

Claire Milne, Windsor resident and Co-Chairperson of the WNP, said the decision notice was published shortly after the previous Forum meeting. The council would issue a notice of referendum by no later than 28 March 2021. The WNP group would run public Zoom sessions on 22 and 28 April 2021 to share information about the Plan.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

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

THAMES VALLEY POLICE UPDATE

Sergeant Catherine Griffiths, Thames Valley Police (TVP), introduced the item, and provided figures for reported police cases between 19 January 2021 and 16 March 2021. Residential burglary, including outbuildings:

- Windsor Central – 2 reported burglaries, including 2 garages and a locked cupboard, with no suspects. There were 3 reported last year in the same period.

- Windsor east – 7 reported burglaries, including a garden shed, 2 thefts on a building site and 2 empty properties.
- Windsor west – 18 reported burglaries, including 5 garden sheds, 3 garages, an empty property, and a vehicle was stolen. There were 2 suspects.

Theft from motor vehicles:

- Windsor Central – 4 reported thefts, with 3 tools thefts from vehicles, with 1 suspect. This was down from 31 reported thefts last year in the same period.
- Windsor east – 19 reported thefts of catalyst convertors, with no suspects. There were 16 reported thefts last year in the same period, and TVP were to run an operation to combat catalyst convertor theft in Windsor east.
- Windsor west – 5 reported thefts, with 3 catalyst convertor and 2 number plate thefts.

Business burglary:

- Windsor central – 2 reported thefts with no suspects. There were 9 reported thefts last year in the same period.
- Windsor east – No reported offences, which was down from last year in the same period.
- Windsor west – 4 reported thefts with no suspects, which was up from last year in the same period.

There was an issue of wildlife crime, including illegal fishing, animal traps, goose shooting, as well as a seized dog in Datchet used for lamping. There were no reported thefts of dogs in Datchet.

Councillor Davey asked if TVP received reports of overzealous use of CCTVs on resident properties, and Sergeant Griffiths said that whilst use of CCTVs was not reported, cameras facing a resident's front door would be actioned.

The Vice Chairman asked if crime rates would be affected after the lockdown restrictions were lifted, and Sergeant Griffiths believed crime rates would increase, as it would be easier to commit crime with an increase of people outdoors. The Vice Chairman requested for an update on the live investigation of The Old Court burglary, and it was agreed to discuss this offline.

The Vice Chairman and Councillor Davies congratulated TVP for winning The Food Academy award and Police Community Support Officer David Bullock for his award on Windsor Street Angels respectively.

Councillor Price asked if video doorbells were useful intelligence for TVP, and Sergeant Griffiths informed they were helpful as they provided video evidence and had timestamps.

The Forum noted the item.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

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

WINDSOR TOWN COUNCIL UPDATE

Suzanne Martin, Electoral & Informational Governance Services Manager, introduced the item. The draft recommendations were approved at full Council on 2 March 2021, which set out that the Council was minded to support the formation of a new Windsor town council, subject to the outcome of the next stage of consultation. The draft recommendations included additional information, such as how the town council would be formed, proposed electoral arrangements and powers and assets that would potentially be transferred from the borough. This addressed the financial and governance implications of a town council.

The consultation was in its second stage, to close on 2 June 2021, and residents in the review area and other interested stakeholders were invited to respond. Three steering questions were provided, and participation could be undertaken by email, post or online. Consultation awareness was raised by contacting interested stakeholders by email, and all individuals and groups who responded to the first consultation were individually contacted in early March 2021. Regular updates of the consultation would be made through the electronic Resident's Newsletter and the borough's public website, and an advert in Windsor Observer.

The consultation leaflet would be sent to approximately 15,000 residential properties in the review area from 29 March 2021. The delay in leaflet distribution was due to the external printer's inability to insert leaflets with the council tax bills. A separate company was therefore being used for the process. The Working Group would meet between April and June 2021 to consider the consultation responses and adjust the content of its recommendations as appropriate based on the responses from the consultation. All redacted consultation responses would be published online in June 2021 after the consultation closed. The final recommendations would be considered by full Council in July 2021.

John Webb, Windsor resident, asked how the Working Group set the precept figure in advance of the 2023/2024 budget: the first year of the Windsor town council. The precept for unparished areas of Windsor had a 1.2% reduction for 2021/2022 that was calculated through a formula using average parish precepts from other parish councils in the borough and the tax base. Councillor Hilton said the draft recommendations included an indicative precept that would reflect the portfolio of services transferred to the town council which would be determined by the borough as the principal authority. The precept would be set based on the services plus the administrative costs to run a town council.

John Webb and Richard Endacott, Windsor resident, asked why the cost of street lighting was put towards the precept for Windsor town council, whilst other parish councils in the borough did not adopt the cost of lighting. Councillor Hilton said it was agreed some time ago to add street lighting to the Special Area Expenses (SAE) account; other parish councils did not manage street lighting in this area. Councillor Tisi asked for clarity as to why street lighting was included in the SAE.

ACTION: The CGR Working Group to advise why the cost of street lighting was included in the SAE.

Richard Endacott asked if Windsor town council or the borough could receive revenue from recreation grounds and open spaces and Councillor Hilton said cost and revenue from grounds and spaces passed to the town council would remain with the town council.

Councillor Price asked when the precept would be agreed in advance of the May 2023 elections and Suzanne Martin said the Reorganisation Order, which was the formal process to bring the town council into effect, was scheduled to be published by December 2021 and would include the details of which services and powers would be transferred. Karen Shepherd, Head of Governance, said the precept would be part of the council tax set as part of the borough's budget in February 2023, and therefore would be known in advance of the elections. Councillor Knowles said the precept discussed was for the first year of the town council, and Town Councillors elected would be responsible to decide the precept going forwards.

John Webb asked if the town council could choose not to provide a service and dispense the cost, and if the borough would provide the services. Suzanne Martin said she believed that once individuals were elected to the town council, there would be a discussion between the borough and town council to determine which other services and assets could transfer to the town council.

Richard Endacott responded to John Webb's question by referring to Brexit, and the Chairman said this was not an appropriate discussion for the Forum.

The Forum noted the item.

TOWN MANAGER UPDATE

Paul Roach, Windsor Town Manager, introduced the item and said central government announced the four-step plan to ease lockdown, and officers were working together to devise a programme. Key issues raised included the lack of social distancing, street activity such as begging, cycling in pedestrianised zone and graffiti in Clewer and Windsor town centre. Community wardens increased attendance in hotspots and took surveys on visitors, which found visitors travelled from over 20 miles to visit Windsor. Enforcement measures and ways of refraining visitors were explored.

Over £12 million was disseminated to businesses; some businesses did not meet the criteria, and this was fed back to the Business Rates Team. Site visits to businesses in Clewer and Dedworth were made, with at least 115 businesses in the area. 30% were open, and a review of which business sectors were open was to be made. Most open businesses were now listed on My Royal Borough, and to further engage businesses, free online training sessions, invitations to the retail and business forums, support services, and promotion of businesses would occur on social media.

Car parking usage was down by 70%, and a total of 40% reduction in footfall in Windsor was likely over the last 12 months. The tap and donate service launched in Windsor Yards, which made contributions to the Windsor Homeless Project. Councillor Price said the service also donated to The Baby Bank. Retail units were being refurbished, and pop-up stores were likely to go online. Conversations with Windsor Royal Station were taking place regarding a pop-up shop to support the Cycle Hub.

The key messages as part of the reopening communication strategy was staying local, visiting other locations in the borough, and straplines 'don't let your guard down' and 'Unlocking Royal Borough' were used. Councillor Tisi said Family Footsteps was a local blog that highlighted local attractions in the borough.

Councillor Price congratulated the community for achieving 6 to 7 awards at the Berkshire High Sheriff Awards. She raised her concerns about the online promotion of

tourist hotspots and asked for clarity on the car and coaching parking graph. Paul Roach said the lines corresponded to years and provided an updated report with the legend for the table after the meeting.

Councillor Tisi asked what was being done considering the trend of online shopping. Paul Roach said social media, My Royal Borough and Visit Windsor were being leveraged, and there was a predication of a 50% increase in footfall in towns and city centres post-lockdown. Retail manager meetings were taking place, and a night-time economy board that explored the safest way to reopen. Councillor Tisi said there was a virtual high-street concept that was used by high-street retailers.

The Vice Chairman congratulated Louise Freeth, Head of Revenues, Benefits, Library and Residents Services, and her team on issuing the grants. Meetings with the Partnership Board for Tourism, Windsor Town Partnership and businesses were taking place to explore how the increase in footfall would be managed and support would be given to businesses that did not have an outdoor dining area.

Susy Shearer, Windsor resident, asked when the locked bicycles at the end of stands as part of the Safety and Security Campaign would come into effect again, and Paul Roach said he was unsure if the campaign would be run again. Conversations were taking place with Windsor Royal Station on managing cycling security concerns. Susy Shearer asked for progress on the tranche one interventions on signage to direct attention to additional pedestrian and cycling space and Paul Roach said he would take this offline.

The Forum noted the item.

COVID-19 UPDATE

David Scott, Head of Communities, presented from the Berkshire Public Health Berkshire Weekly COVID-19 briefing from 12 to 18 March 2021. The Situational Awareness report showed a drop in the positivity rate, which was down to 2.1%. the number of cases per 100,000 was approximately 50% and the number of cases per 100,000 of over 60s was 27.4%, which was a drop. The reduction was likely due to vaccination rollouts.

The proportion of COVID-19 deaths had dropped and the number of patient admissions and inpatients at Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust had reduced. Vaccinations were rolling out well, despite the pause due to concerns on the AstraZeneca vaccination. Overall, the numbers of cases were reducing, though there were slight increases in the younger age groups and 30-34 years old, which could be reflective of schools reopening and the working age group.

The Forum noted the item.

LIBRARY TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

Angela Huisman, Library and Resident Contact Lead, introduced the item and said the consultation on the brough's Library Service was being reviewed, and proposals were put forward to reshape and service. The aim was to create a sustainable and resilient library service, provide a digital offer and services to the most vulnerable, and deliver saving to the council. The consultation, which was made available in British Sign Language, was due to close on 30 April 2021.

There was an uplift in library use in recent years for activities and schools had an increasing demand for the service. Before COVID-19, under 24s used the library the most, but during the pandemic, 18-25-year olds accessed the service most. Some locations did not sustain interest, funding, or community engagement as others.

The proposals sought to retain professional staff for the statutory opening hours who would undergo an enhanced DBS check and rigorous training. Services that would remain included council services, the home library service, online resources, Books on Prescription, Book Touch, and more.

The next steps were to set up the loan service for digital devices, develop the virtual reality and interactive digital technology for children. I.T. drop-ins were delivered over phone and email during lockdown and would return to face-to-face once the restrictions ceased. Public sessions were held to discuss the proposals, and the responses would be given to Cabinet for approval.

John Webb said Dedworth library served an area of severe deprivation with high levels of loneliness and young families with no support. He asked if residents without access to digital devices would be unsupported if the opening hours were reduced and the service became digital. Angela Huisman said this would be best discussed in the resident engagement sessions and a comprehensive needs analysis was being undertaken. John Webb asked if libraries sold books to the public, and Angela Huisman said libraries did sell books, but the margins were small.

Councillor Price informed residents that herself and Councillors Tisi and Davey set meetings with library staff, RBWM Library Friends and the Lead Member to explore the possibilities for Dedworth Library. Before COVID-19, the library ran 12 sessions, which were proposed to reduce to 4 or 5 sessions, each costing £3,000. Cost savings, such as reviewing the cleaning contract, converting the service to a Community Interest Company or charity to remove the £16,000 business rate cost, and converting the unused boiler room for community use were explored. Ongoing discussions with major employers in the area on supporting the community library were taking place and four potential grant funding avenues were under review. The 'Supporting Dedworth Library Community Hub' Facebook group was created for residents to find information on Dedworth library, and residents who did not have access to social media would receive leaflets.

Councillor Tisi said there was misinformation that libraries were not being used and hence the hours were being reduced, as library usage was increasing. The library space was flexible as the bookshelves could be moved to use the library as a room hire.

Councillor Knowles said the other libraries provided electric library cards to residents to allow them to collect and return books, with a weekly visit from staff to tidy the library. Monetising ideas such as using libraries as a drop-off and collection point for parcels, having café facilities, and using the library as a registered examination space were shared.

Richard Endacott said libraries were critical to the community for the demographic of Dedworth, such as the elderly and young mothers. Rather than cutbacks, there was a need to maintain and establish the community hub.

Councillor Davey felt the budget for library services was unsatisfactory, and a lot of investment was put in property developments. The Chairman said the discussion should not take place at the Forum. The Vice Chairman said the budget was approved by full council and Councillor Hilton said over a third of affordable housing was provided in the developments, with a return to the council. Councillor Knowles said he felt it was inappropriate that Councillor Hilton could respond as Lead Member when the Chairman said the topic was not a Forum matter.

(Councillor Knowles left the meeting.)

The Chairman said there were discussions on social media regarding the lack of reissuing of the green bins and invited Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning, Environmental Services and Maidenhead, to provide an update. Councillor Coppinger said the borough restarted issuing contracts for green bins on 1 March 2021; however, the website had not been updated. Residents were welcome to apply online. Councillor Davey said a resident informed him that her green bins had not been collected on nine occasions and she did not have access to the internet.

The Forum noted the item.

WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Price suggested future consultations to be brought to forthcoming Forums, to schedule the Army Covenant item and to have written reports from TVP in advance of the Forum. The Vice Chairman suggested to delay the Army Covenant item due to a lack of updates and the Chairman informed that due to annual leave at TVP, a report was not submitted.

Councillor Davies said the Plastic Free Windsor item scheduled for May 2021 would be an opportunity to inform residents about the campaign. The Vice Chairman suggested scheduling the Electric Charging item, as the report would be ready to discuss. Councillor Tisi suggested scheduling the Cycling Action Group item for the July 2021 agenda and the Clewer and Dedworth Project to update on the community orchard. Councillor Davey asked if a Forum meeting could be scheduled before the referendum, and the Vice Chairman advised this would be going into purdah.

The Forum noted the item.

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

All future meetings to be held on the following dates (at 6.15pm):

- 26 May 2021
- 13 July 2021
- 2 September 2021

The Chairman thanked all officers, Members, and residents.

The meeting, which began at 6.15 pm, finished at 8.56 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....