

DISABILITY AND INCLUSION FORUM

MONDAY, 15 MARCH 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Angela Clark, Lisa Hughes, Bunce, Sharon Carrigan, Peter Haley, Manley, Robin Pemberton, Watson, John Bowden and Gurpreet Bhangra

Also in attendance: Councillors Ross McWilliams, John Baldwin, Simon Bond, David Coppinger, Carole Da Costa, Maureen Hunt, Samantha Rayner, Gurch Singh and Donna Stimson

Officers: Jesal Dhokia, Emma Duncan, Tracy Hendren, Angela Huisman, Shilpa Manek, Helen Preedy and Neil Walter

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and read out the virtual meeting note.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

MINUTES FROM THE LAST FORUM AND ACTIONS MONITORING

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2020 were a true and accurate record.

This was proposed by Lisa Hughes and seconded by Dominic Manley.

MATTERS ARISING - A308 TOUCAN CROSSING, SURROUNDING PAVEMENTS AND CYCLE RACK

The Chairman read out an update from Vikki Roberts, Principal Commissioning Officer. It read that the forecourt refurbishment was underway and would be completed by May 2021.

The updates with regards to accessibility aspects agreed with David Scott in December for the removal of the two trees would be carried out on 5th March 2021 and the surrounds made good. The grinding of the stumps will be removed at a later date when the next road closure was in place at the beginning of April. The installation of a barrier (railing) at the north end of the bike racks would be completed once the tree was removed (middle of March).

The Chairman reported that she had noticed that one tree had been removed.

The Chairman would keep this item on the agenda until all the work had been completed.

Neil Walters reported that he had confirmation from Vikki Roberts that both trees had now been removed.

Lisa Hughes confirmed that both trees had been removed.

Councillor Singh asked if there was an update on the ends of the cycle racks.

The Chairman requested a further detailed update for the next Forum meeting.

ACTION: Keep on agenda and invite Vikki Roberts to the meeting

MATTERS ARISING - BLUE BADGE PARKING

Neil Walter, Parking Principal, updated the Forum on the progress. Since the last meeting and the discussion that took place, Neil Walter informed the Forum that the improvements to the Grove Road spaces had all been agreed and the work was nearly completed. The location of the bays had been moved and some of the railings would be removed so that those using the bays would have direct access to the footpath. The changes for Park Street, Providence Place and West Street had all been issued and agreed and the work would be complete in the next few weeks. As far as Bridge Avenue was concerned, these were part of many other changes. Neil Walter had received confirmation of the additional restrictions that there would be for residents so that work had also now been ordered including the 12-metre section of disabled bay. Nicholson's Lane and St Ives Road were both on hold as further information was being awaited. The lowering of the kerbs would be looked at once all the initial work had been carried out. The funding had been agreed for this work.

Councillor Singh asked about the timelines for the bays to be in place on Bridge Avenue. Neil Walter responded that it would be another three to four weeks, middle of April.

Dominic Manley asked if, as per the minutes of the last meeting, had fifteen new bays been completed? Neil Walter informed the Forum that all the permissions had been granted but the work had not completed yet.

The Chairman thanked Neil Walter and suggested it stay on the agenda until the work had been completed.

ACTION: Keep on agenda and invite Neil Walter to the meeting

MATTERS ARISING - BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Lisa Hughes update the Forum on the BLP. Lisa Hughes had at last year's planning inspector's hearings, again, highlighted the difference between the estimates of current and future need for Accessible Homes. Lisa Hughes had developed from government, NHS and other robust datasets versus the unsubstantiated provision in the Borough Local Plan. The latter was both very small and open to challenge from developers as it had no link to assessed need.

After the hearings Lisa Hughes met with Ian Gillespie, a consultant appointed by RBWM to shepherd the Borough Local Plan through the hearings and the Planning Inspector's approval. Lisa Hughes' estimates were discussed and a re-examination of the financial viability of M4(2) homes.

Another meeting took place shortly before Christmas and Mr Gillespie laid out his proposal for new Accessible Homes, having revisited the financial viability work. The proposal for policy HO2 was for 30% of new homes on developments of 20 or more dwellings to be built as M4(2) "accessible and adaptable" and 5% to be built as M4(3),

wheelchair user dwellings. This would bring RBWM in line with other comparable local authorities and begin to offer residents an opportunity to live in a future proofed home as well as allowing residents who are already living with disabilities a safe and accessible place to live.

Mr Gillespie had hoped that a draft amended Policy HO2 would be produced before Christmas and would email a draft version to the Forum. Lisa had heard no more since then so had no idea whether Mr Gillespie's proposal was accepted internally by RBWM. It would be strange, given the 2020 work done on viability testing, if his proposal is diluted or scrapped.

Lisa Hughes asked if RBWM Planning could provide an update on Policy HO2 and in particular to confirm the draft policy would reflect the increased percentage of Accessible and Adaptable Homes and contain a percentage of wheelchair user dwellings?

Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for planning, informed the Forum that everybody had been concentrating totally over the last few months on answering all the questions that had been set by the inspector. This had just completed and were awaiting the response from the inspector. For this reason, no update could be provided at this point.

The Chairman concluded the item and asked Councillor Coppinger to update the Forum when he had a response.

ACTION: Keep on agenda and invite Councillor Coppinger to the meeting

Councillor Singh asked about a specific planning application and Councillor Coppinger would speak with Councillor Singh outside of the meeting.

Councillor C DaCosta asked if all was approved, how long would it be before changes would be seen in planning applications? Councillor Coppinger could not comment on this until he had seen the report.

The Chairman thanked Lisa Hughes.

MATTERS ARISING - CHANGES TO SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

The report by Steve Eker, Commissioning Manager, had been published with the agenda. The clerk read out the report.

Lisa Hughes asked a couple of questions, Lisa Hughes wanted to understand the figures a bit more. Also, how would employers be able to deal with two different providers and this caused a lot of confusion. Finally, had the autism partnership board been involved in discussions? Robin Pemberton confirmed that they had not been informed.

ACTION: Arrange a meeting with Steve Eker, Adult Social Care and Optalis for the Forum. Invite Councillor Hunt and Councillor Carroll to this meeting.

ACTION: Keep on agenda and have another update at next Forum

ITEM - 2021/22 BUDGET

Lisa Hughes informed the Forum that the overall spending on Adult Social Care would increase but there were significant cuts to services and support for Adults with Learning Disabilities. Spending on their day services would be halved and two day centres would be closed. Lisa Hughes continued to inform the Forum that £600k would be cut from 211 adults with learning disabilities who lived in Residential care, supported living or have support in a family home or community setting.

Lisa Hughes raised concerns about this at February's Cabinet Meeting and Sharon Bunce along with Lisa submitted questions to the Full Council later in the month (the written and supplementary questions and their responses will be provided to Forum members). The Lead Member for Adults, Children & Health stated these were not budget cuts but part of a transformation strategy. Councillor Carroll said that a significant proportion of the service had been brought in house into Optalis and that was why there was a difference in expenditure, the policy decision had been heavily scrutinised at the time.

In response to the question about the status of an analysis of supported living packages, Councillor Carroll confirmed it had been completed but he wasn't able to provide details at the council meeting. He would write to Sharon Bunce with that information subsequently. This was still being awaited.

In response to the question about the closure of the Day Centres and halving of spending on day services for Adults with Learning Disabilities, Cllr Carroll stated there would be a full, open 12-week consultation. Further details were required for this.

Lisa Hughes commented that people with learning disabilities were among the most marginalised in society; having poorer health, life expectancy and employment prospects while being at greater risk of domestic abuse and dying from Covid.

The other major area of concern in the budget which was raised at the Cabinet related to the digitisation of services and reduction (in hours, locations and staff) of face to face support. Many people with disabilities and older people could not or found it very hard to use online services. This was not made any better by the sub-optimal RBWM website.

Many older residents would not have had training on using the internet and digital services at work, so there were big training and confidence issues to overcome. Many would not have internet access at home. Additionally, age-related impairments such as cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, essential tremor, memory loss and arthritis would make using digital services far more difficult, even for confident and regular internet users. Some younger residents with disabilities would also have accessing and using digital services.

There could not only be a withdrawal of RBWM face to face or telephone service provision and reliance on individual residents or community support. Residents affected by this would be among the most vulnerable in the borough and must have their needs met.

Lisa Hughes suggested that these two items be kept on the agenda.

Claire Watson commented that more consideration be given to everything being online as there were so many young people whose families were in contact through PACiP who were 18-19 years old and were using an iPad at school or college, they only knew how to use the device for school/college.

Councillor Rayner commented that these were really important points and it would be great to pick all these issues up outside the meeting to make all the services better for everyone.

ACTION: Keep on agenda and have another update at next Forum

ITEM - COMMUNITY HUB PROJECT UPDATE

An update was provided by Jesal Dhokia, transformation project manager. Jesal Dhokia reported that she had worked with a number of organisations and communities across the borough during the first lockdown around covid response. The responses from the communities were looked at and a blueprint project was created initially in the Clewer and Dedworth area. This was based on the evidence from public health and how the community in the area was understood. Five sub-groups were created led by the borough's housing association, these were Community empowerment, Community Safety, Physical Environment Health and well-being and Employment and skills. The main aim was to understand re engage with the communities based on engagement and communication and understand what their strengths were and really change the way that the borough worked with the communities on ground. For the sub-groups, local residents, local organisations and local councillors were invited. A project board was created which was led by an independent Chairman, Peter Hayley. This board was not a decision-making board but engage health and social care to communicate and work together. A steering group was also created for Clewer, Dedworth and Windsor area which was purely community led. The steering group was chaired by the Youth Engagement Service. The Youth Engagement Service already had fifteen community representatives steering the progress of the project. Five sub groups were invited to talk about what they felt needed to change in terms of the borough within that particular area and focus on the strengths of those communities. An example would be, when discussing physical environments, this led to an individual who was a local resident who had an interest in the local environment around planting trees and biodiversity. This was supported and the residents were helped to create a Company Interest Company and engage with other residents who have the same interest. The resident was assisted to access external funding too. Also conversations were had with resident organisations and councillors within the area to understand what their vision was around changing the way that the community led their specific projects. The community conversations were led by three organisations, the Yes Consortium, Community learning Adult skills service and Abri Housing. From the conversations, twenty-seven projects had been identified that the residents wanted. Five projects had been taken forward based on those conversations. The external funding had been accessed to support the projects. The five projects were disadvantaged children in young peoples activities and a mini consortium had been created with the organisations and the local people who wanted to get involved. It had been possible to access £25,000 of external funding to support the youth consortium, to support children and young people at a disadvantage enabling them to access not just digital activities but as we move slowly into out of covid, to access activities in that area. The second area was employment and skills. There were a lot of residents that felt confused about looking for a job so the team were looking to bringing together all the information from the RBWM website for people to access all the information in one place. The third project was about sustainable transport and people and their bikes being stolen, so residents wanted a bike shed to safeguard their bikes. A partnership

had been created with Maidenhead Cycle Hub and they were working with The Swan within Windsor to create and replicate the Maidenhead Cycle Hub activities within Windsor. Some external funding had been secured for this. The fourth area was the physical environment, mentioned earlier and the final project was the food distribution network. Many organisations had developed services to deliver food to vulnerable residents, especially as a covid response. However, the vulnerable residents did not know how to access the services. With the help of Councillor Carol Da Costa, a food network had been created within the area and all the food network organisations had come together to discuss how they could support as many residents within the area. The team had now started looking at Maidenhead.

The project board and steering group would remain the same and organisations and members would be invited to join the steering group. The five topic areas would remain the same, community empowerment, community safety and health environment, health and well being skills and employment and physical environment. The two organisations, the Yes Consortium and the Clas, Community, Learning, Adult Services, would come into Maidenhead and have discussions with as many organisations, residents and officers to understand what needed to be done around Maidenhead. The projects would be very different with Maidenhead as there was a very large BAME population within Maidenhead which the team were hoping to engage with around vaccinations and covid but also other projects going forward. A project under the health and wellbeing project had already been identified where twenty residents had been identified and £50000 of external funding had been secured. This project was to support residents who did not meet the adult social care criteria and threshold but were frequent users in hospital but wanted to be apart of their community and use their strengths to strengthen the community. The national wellbeing circle provider would be brought in to support the Maidenhead Magpies, the Maidenhead Mosque and any other organisation that wanted to get involved and create well-being circles for these 20 people within the community.

ACTION: Jesal Dhokia to send the Clewer and Dedworth report to members via the clerk.

Jesal Dhokia reminded all that they could still get involved in the Windsor projects and the Maidenhead ones too.

The Chairman thanked Jesal Dhokia and commented that so much had been achieved in lockdown. The Chairman asked if people with disabilities and housebound had been located in the Clewer and Dedworth area? Councillor Carole Da Costa responded that she was involved in running a community hub in West Windsor and the entire area was leafleted when the hub was set up at the beginning of Covid. Councillor Da Costa informed the Forum that she worked closely with Age Concern and the community wardens, who had a list of vulnerable adults and people with learning disabilities. The community wardens had been informing the hub when people needed additional support. Social services had also referred to the hub to support people who were not able to get out during covid. These opportunities allow the hub to work with residents to look at what the future would look like. The areas being looked at were the recovery of covid and how things move post covid.

Councillor Stimson addressed the Forum and informed them that the council were trying to pull together climate change and sustainability and also health and well being as they were all connected. The lessons learnt from the Clewer and Dedworth projects could be grown upon when moving to Maidenhead, with the experiences from the Disability and Inclusion Forum and the experience of Lisa Hughes.

Lisa Hughes commented that it was a really interesting project. Lisa Hughes commented that it was really important to consider the changes in the libraries and also things like day services for adults with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities as part of the joined up working in order to measure the outcomes clearly.

Lisa Hughes asked who made the decisions and were projects being prioritised according to scale and size across the different wards in the borough and was there a process of measuring outcomes to understand the impact that the projects were having. Finally, Lisa Hughes commented that the people hardest to reach were probably the ones that were not connected to the organisations already mentioned and that Councillor Da Costa's approach was probably reaching more people.

Jesal Dhokia responding explaining that the project board made no decisions but had Optalis, AfC, CCG and a GP representative on that board. The steering group was the decision-making board and that had representatives of the community on there and the five sub-groups under that. The process of measuring outcomes with understanding how the organisations were working within the community and not creating red tape around those organisations. In terms of the hardest to reach, the CV list on the system called Leon had been used to be able to communicate with the clinically extremely vulnerable. These were communicated through the library services.

ACTION: To keep on agenda and invite Jesal Dhokia to next meeting to give an update on the projects.

Councillor Rayner commented that Covid had given the council the opportunity to join the dots. The library service had called lots of residents and had done an excellent job of reaching the most vulnerable.

ITEM - LIBRARY CONSULTATIONS

Angela Huisman, Library and Resident Contact Lead, gave a presentation to the Forum. (Presentation attached)

The Chairman asked if some of the smaller libraries would close permanently after the consultation. Councillor Rayner responded by explaining that currently the five-year plan for libraries was being looked at including the savings made in the budget for the next financial year. The consultation was being carried out to find solutions so not to have to close any library.

Lisa Hughes asked about the insulation of Maidenhead library. Angela Huisman commented that a few ago the library had to be rewired and the heating was not accommodated in the way it should have been but it had been resolved and the library were now working closely with the sustainability team so that it was as green as possible and as efficient as possible. It would take a few years to get that all in place.

The Chairman asked Angela Huisman to spell out the anachronisms in the presentations. The Chairman urged all Forum Members to complete the consultation.

Angela Huisman asked for assistance with the EQIA's.

ACTION: Keep on Agenda and invite Angela Huisman to the meeting for an update.

ITEM - HOUSING STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Councillor McWilliams informed the Forum that RBWM was putting together its first comprehensive Housing Strategy which picked up on many different areas. The three key areas were properties of delivering new homes, supporting health and wellbeing and delivering homes that support our vulnerable people. Councillor McWilliams continued to give the bigger picture before Tracey Hendren gave a presentation to the Forum. Councillor McWilliams reminded the Forum of the headlines three years ago and commented that the service had improved massively. It is expected that developer partners take the strategy into account when bringing forward any applications and it sets out some really clear priorities for the kind of homes and the kind of places that the council would like to deliver. Councillor McWilliams commented that the Chair and Vice Chair had met with the developers and it had been a very successful meeting.

Tracey Hendren, Head of Housing and Environmental Health, gave a presentation to the Forum. (Presentation attached).

The Chairman asked how many flats in the centre of Maidenhead would be available for social housing? Councillor McWilliams responded that for St Clouds Way, the shared ownership was 30% that was being proposed and he thought for York Road it was 40 or 45% which included socially rented units. Councillor McWilliams offered to find out and inform the Forum.

ACTION: Councillor McWilliams to inform Forum of exact number of social housing in the new developments.

Councillor McWilliams continued to inform the Forum that an important point to note was that the schemes were planned when the borough's focus was on shared ownership and Section 106 and affordable housing commitments, and whilst this was still the focus, it was an important part of negotiations with development partners that the housing strategy explicitly states the ambition to deliver on the objectively obsessed need which was a hugely ambitious undertaking because delivering that number of socially rented units was very difficult because of many reasons related to the current system of development in this country.

Lisa Hughes thanked both Councillor Mc Williams and Tracey Hendren. Lisa Hughes asked if the housing register mentioned captured the number of people requesting accommodation who had disabilities or some kind of impairment that would affect their housing need. Tracey Hendren commented that specific questions around what disabilities impact on the household so that the more generic medical conditions could be captured.

Lisa Hughes asked if the registered housing providers such as Housing Solutions and their approach or the RBWM strategy to target them towards building accessible homes and by that Lisa Hughes did not just mean mandatory as these were just for visiting. Lisa Hughes asked for more information on this. Councillor McWilliams commented that the Strategy include a key commitment to working with the registered providers to drive up customer service and customer satisfaction numbers both for tenants and also leaseholders. This is going to be achieved by ensuring that the relationships are more formalised and working more strategically.

Lisa Hughes also asked how RBWM supports both tenants of private rented accommodation but also landlords that are happy to make changes but could not fund them. Tracey Hendren commented that the disabled facilities grant was available for private properties, but permission was needed from the private landlord. The borough were going to adopt a landlords forum which would enable the borough to ask landlords of what the challenges were and work with them to embrace a joint approach.

Councillor Baldwin asked for commitments 11 and 22 to be sent to him as he thought here was a conflict between planning policy and housing policy. He would take this matter offline.

ACTION: Keep on agenda and invite both Councillor McWilliams and Tracey Hendren to next meeting.

ITEM - BETTER ENGAGEMENT

Emma Duncan, Monitoring Officer, Council's new deputy director for law and Governance. Emma Duncan explained that her role was to help the council make better decisions, whether that was making sure that people had the right information or that the processes were open and transparent. Emma Duncan gave some background and informed the Forum of how things would change going forward to have better relationships which were constructive and responsive. The aim was to have good engagement that created social connections between individuals and groups enhancing motivation and capacity to participate in decision making fostering more open relationship with the community and save time that may have otherwise be spent in fighting long-run battles.

The Chairman asked if the weekly newsletter being published to residents was part of this new change. Emma Duncan informed the Forum that this was through the Communications Team trying to get better links across a whole range of functions with content specific information.

The Chairman raised an issue of a recent consultation called 'Walking and Cycling', within this consultation was some very important information about the closure of Shoppenhangers Road to make it a bus gate. This information was disguised. The Chairman commented that all consultations needed to be very direct and truthful. Emma Duncan commented that the formal consultations had certain requirements to follow and as the Monitoring Officer, she would be making sure that those consultations were legal.

Lisa Hughes thanked the Monitoring Officer. Lisa Hughes was very pleased to the approach going forward. Lisa Hughes suggested that there were many improvements to be made, to have a standard approach to make it easier for residents to participate and respond.

Councillor Rayner commented that cultural changes in the organisation were important and needed to be made. This was a time that the council had the most ongoing consultations.

DATE OF NEXT FORUM

The Forum noted the date of the next meeting.

The meeting, which began at 11.00 am, finished at 1.35 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....