

NOTICE  
OF  
MEETING  
  
**DISABILITY AND INCLUSION FORUM**

will meet on

**MONDAY, 15TH MARCH, 2021**

**At 11.00 am**

by

**VIRTUAL MEETING - ONLINE ACCESS, ON [RBWM YOUTUBE](#)**

TO: MEMBERS OF THE DISABILITY AND INCLUSION FORUM

ANGELA CLARK (CHAIRMAN), LISA HUGHES (VICE CHAIRMAN), SHARON BUNCE, SHARON CARRIGAN, TIM CLARE, PETER HALEY, DOMINIC MANLEY, JO MAXWELL-HERON, ROBIN PEMBERTON, CLAIRE WATSON AND COUNCILLOR GURPREET BHANGRA AND JOHN BOWDEN

Karen Shepherd – Head of Governance - Issued: 5 March 2021

Members of the Press and Public are welcome to attend Part I of this meeting. The agenda is available on the Council's web site at [www.rbwm.gov.uk](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk) or contact the Panel Administrator **Shilpa Manek** 01628 796310

**Recording of Meetings** – In line with the council's commitment to transparency the Part I (public) section of the virtual meeting will be streamed live and recorded via Zoom. By participating in the meeting by audio and/or video, you are giving consent to being recorded and acknowledge that the recording will be in the public domain. If you have any questions regarding the council's policy, please speak to Democratic Services or Legal representative at the meeting.

## **AGENDA**

### **PART I**

<b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT</u></b>	<b><u>PAGE NO</u></b>
1.	<b><u>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</u></b>  A welcome from the Chairman and introductions of all present.	5 - 12
2.	<b><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b>  To receive any apologies for absence.	
3.	<b><u>MINUTES FROM THE LAST FORUM AND ACTIONS MONITORING</u></b>  To agree the minutes of the last Forum held on 14 December 2020 and receive updates on the actions.	
4.	<b><u>MATTERS ARISING - A308 TOUCAN CROSSING, SURROUNDING PAVEMENTS AND CYCLE RACK</u></b>  To receive an update from Vikki Roberts, Principal Commissioning Officer.	
5.	<b><u>MATTERS ARISING - BLUE BADGE PARKING</u></b>  To receive an update from Neil Walters, Parking Principal.	13 - 16
6.	<b><u>MATTERS ARISING - BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN</u></b>  To receive an update from Lisa Hughes.	
7.	<b><u>MATTERS ARISING - CHANGES TO SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT</u></b>  A written update to be provided by Steve Eker, Commissioning Manager.	
8.	<b><u>ITEM - 2021/22 BUDGET</u></b>  Update by Vice Chairman, Lisa Hughes.	
9.	<b><u>ITEM - COMMUNITY HUB PROJECT UPDATE</u></b>  To receive an update from Jesal Dhokia, Transformation Project Manager.	
10.	<b><u>ITEM - LIBRARY CONSULTATIONS</u></b>  To receive a presentation on the Library Transformation Strategy by Angela Huisman, Library and Resident Contact Lead.	
11.	<b><u>ITEM - HOUSING STRATEGY OVERVIEW</u></b>  To receive an overview from Councillor McWilliams.	

12. ITEM - BETTER ENGAGEMENT

To have a discussion on better engagement, led by Emma Duncan, Monitoring Officer.

13. DATE OF NEXT FORUM

To be confirmed.

The suggested dates for the 2021-2022 Municipal year are:

Monday 21 June 2021

Monday 13 September 2021

Monday 13 December 2021

Monday 14 March 2022

All Forum meetings will be at 11am.

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# Agenda Item 3

## DISABILITY AND INCLUSION FORUM

MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2020

PRESENT: Angela Clark, Lisa Hughes, Sharon Carrigan, Peter Haley, Dominic Manley, Robin Pemberton, Claire Watson and Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra

Also in attendance: Jess Cully, Huw Jones and Neil White (Project Centre)

Officers: Shilpa Manek, Helen Preedy, David Scott and Neil Walter

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Sharon Bunce.

### MINUTES FROM THE LAST FORUM AND ACTIONS MONITORING

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the minutes of the last meeting held on 14 September were a true and accurate record of the meeting. This was proposed by Dominic Manley and seconded by Lisa Hughes.

### MATTERS ARISING - A308 TOUCAN CROSSING, ROUNDING PAVEMENTS AND CYCLE RACK

David Scott, Head of Communities, updated the Forum. The actions had been agreed but not yet completed. David Scott reported that the two trees at the crossing on the south west side were due to be removed and the surface reinstated to what is currently there. A rail would be installed to the south side. A railing would be added in front of the cycle rack to eliminate the trip hazard by the electricity pillar and screening would be provided to prevent walking into the cycle racks. The Chairman asked about reducing the cycle rack but that would have not been possible. Lisa Hughes commented that she was a member of the Great Western Railway Panel. At a meeting in November 2020, the Panel were presented the station design. Lisa Hughes had raised a few points including the design of the cycle rack and engineers had taken this on board for future developments.

**ACTION: Keep on Agenda for March 2021.**

### MATTERS ARISING - BLUE BADGE PARKING

Neil Walter, Parking Principal, showed the Forum some new proposals and went through the detail. There would be a potential fifteen blue badge parking bays in the town centre but not exactly where discussed initially.

The Chairman asked about the proposed time line on the Grove Road Car Park bays and was informed by Neil Walter that he would speak with the Lead Member after the comments from the Forum and get his views on the proposal then it would take two-three months to put all measures in place, it would be approximately March 2021. The bays would be in place for about two-three years in Grove Road Car Park before the development.

The bays on Bridge Avenue were discussed and since this was a one-way road, the bay would be on the right-hand side which was hard curb and very difficult to manoeuvre from especially for wheelchair users. Neil Walter reassured the Forum that all would be done to mitigate the issues.

Lisa Hughes asked what needed to happen to make the proposals real. Neil Walter responded that the cost was small to change the existing bays, then the overall traffic amendment, signage and lowering of pavements. The bigger changes would require capital funding and the changes to the Highways would take longer too. The bays could be put in place in the first instance and then make the further changes at a later date.

Dominic Manley asked about the height restriction of 2.1 m at most car parks and where this figure had come from. He was concerned that the same height restriction had been placed at Braywick Leisure Centre where it was not necessary.

**ACTION: David Scott would investigate this and get back to Dominic Manley.**

### MATTERS ARISING - MULTI STOREY CAR PARK NICHOLSON QUARTER

The Chairman updated the Forum on discussions that had taken place with the architects at STRIPE. They had received an email at the end of October 2020 advising that all points discussed which had been discussed at the previous meeting had been achieved except the enlargement of the lift cars, they had been unable to achieve the increased width. They also added that Changing Places and the accessible WC would not be the responsibility of People to Places, ShopMobilty. Other points included:

- The ground floor parking clearance had been raised from 2.2m to 2.6m.
- The ShopMobilty and disabled WC and the Changing Places would be located on the ground floor.
- 24 blue badge parking bays would be at ground level with 2.6m headroom to accommodate higher vehicles and those with roof boxes.
- Tight turns had been eliminated at ground floor.
- An additional 18 blue badge spaces would be located on the first floor with 2.2m headroom.
- ShopMobilty would have ample storage for scooters and other items, charging and displays.
- A change over space provided at parking entrance to shops.
- Colour coding of spaces for ShopMobilty would be included in the proposals.
- Changing Places on ground level would share a lobby with ShopMobilty but would also have an entrance from Rock Lane for out of shop hours. This would be maintained by facilities. All doors to WCs would be outward opening and access to shops would be power assisted or automatic.
- Power assisted doors would be proposed at ground and first floor levels where blue badge users would access the lobbies.
- The numbers of floors of the car park had been reduced to eight and therefore the lifts had been reduced to three.
- The lifts would be accessible in emergencies.
- The new car park would include the parking spaces that were being lost from other car parks in the town centre. The current provision in the town centre was 27 disabled spaces and the new car park would have 42 disabled spaces.

Peter Hayley thanked the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Forum for all the hard work that had led to the great improvements. Peter Hayley informed the Forum that the only one issue now was that minibuses would not be able to drive into the car park as they currently did but nothing could be done about this due to the vehicle heights. In the new facility, the minibuses would have to park just outside.

Lisa Hughes responded to the points raised by Peter Hayley. The minibus point was outside the car park but was as close as possible to the entrance with a dedicated parking bay which was possibly covered.

The Chairman informed the Forum that the application was due to go to the Planning Committee in the near future, possible February 2021.

## MATTERS ARISING - HOUSING FOR ALL WITH DISABILITIES & BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Lisa Hughes reported to the Forum that in October she had been invited to give a short presentation about Accessible Homes to the developers, officers and councillors who comprised the Maidenhead Developers' Forum. Lisa Hughes sought to convey a message that building more Accessible & Affordable homes was a commercial opportunity for developers. A recent study by RIBA had indicated that "future-proofing" was a key criterion for the over 55s looking to move house. It was received politely but some weren't sure their investors would agree.

Lisa Hughes commented that it was good to see that almost all the dwellings in the planning application for St Cloud Way were proposed to be Accessible & Affordable.

Lisa Hughes reported on the Borough Local Plan, the planning inspector had carried out an examination of the BLP between October and December. Two of the points that Lisa had submitted in last year's consultation were included in her examination. As a result, Lisa participated in two sessions of her hearings.

The positive outcome from the first session was that RBWM had agreed to monitor the number of Accessible & Affordable homes built over the plan period as well as the number of specialist accommodation places made available.

The second session examined housing policies in the BLP and Lisa had described the numbers of current and future borough residents who had different disabilities and housing needs – the data Lisa had used was from the government, NHS or other reputable and publicly available sources. The following three things had been highlighted:

- 1 RBWM could not provide supporting data or explain why the percentage of Accessible & Affordable homes to be built decreased from 100% to 5% in the BLP in 2017.
- 2 RBWM could have very easily (and so should have) compiled this data. Also, they held relevant borough data which was not publicly available and would have improved estimates of housing needs still further.
- 3 There were thousands of borough residents who had or would have housing needs that weren't met by the mandatory baseline accessibility. This was a stark contrast to Policy HO2 and the few Accessible & Affordable homes that would be built as a result.

After the second session Lisa had a Zoom call with Ian Gillespie, a consultant engaged by RBWM to help get the BLP through the planning inspection. It was a good call and it was agreed that an aim of 25-30% homes to be built as Accessible & Affordable was reasonable. Ian had thought that some additional work on viability testing could be done to check the aim would still deliver a reasonable level of profit for the developer.

It was not yet clear whether RBWM would change Policy HO2.

Lisa Hughes continued to report that at a council meeting late last year, both Angela and Lisa had had a very brief conversation with Councillor McWilliams about the council updating its Housing Strategy. Councillor McWilliams said that the strategy would be progressed in 2020, after the homeless strategy had been finalised. They remained in contact with Councillor

McWilliams and presented to him, the deputy MD and heads of Planning & Housing over the summer.

As preparation for this Forum meeting Lisa had emailed Cllr McWilliams for an update and had received a last-minute invitation to a stakeholder consultation meeting on November 24th. Tracey Hedren chaired the consultation event which had considered the draft strategy's objectives and outcomes. Lisa had re-iterated the housing needs of People with Disabilities / OP in mainstream homes and specialist accommodation.

The next steps were for the draft Housing Strategy to go to Cabinet in December 2020 with a subsequent public consultation. Feedback from this would be analysed and a final version of the Strategy would be considered for adoption by Cabinet in 2021.

Lisa Hughes reported that Councillor McWilliams had said that there would be "lots of opportunities for feeding into the strategy. Ensuring high levels of accessibility was set to be one of the key commitments in the Strategy."

### MATTERS ARISING - WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM EQUALITIES OFFICER

Helen Preedy introduced herself as the new Equality and Community Engagement Officer for the Council. Helen Preedy had previously been doing sports and community development as the Sports Development Manager and did various roles in the Council over the last 15 years. Helen Preedy had worked with a number of disability groups to identify the needs, highlighting barriers and then arranging adapted existing sessions particularly with sport and physical activities. Helen Preedy was looking forward to using her skills in her new role and was excited to learn more about equality. Helen Preedy would be meeting the Chairman and Vice Chairman in the new year. Helen Preedy was happy for any Forum Member to contact her at any time.

### ITEM - CHANGES TO SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Angela Clark read out the report that had been supplied by the relevant officer. The report was attached.

The Chairman thought it was very important to know where Ways into Work were situated in the current review that was going to be undertaken. The Chairman suggested that she would contact the officer outside the Forum. The Vice Chairman agreed and also felt it would be useful to have a meeting with the report authors and better understand exactly how all the people who were within the sphere of needing support for employment were getting that support and the future plans.

Dominic Manley asked how Ways into Work fitted into the council structure. David Scott responded that they were employed on a part time basis as part of the Braywick Nature Centre and reported to the ranger who was responsible for their day-to-day management. They were supported by one or two specific individuals whilst at work. This had varied a little as a result of the pandemic, but they were now back at work and continuing to attend their hours on a part-time basis with supervision.

Lisa Hughes added that Ways into Work supported more people than only those with learning disabilities and autism. There were some direct employees of RBWM who had been and were still supported by Ways into Work.

The people that ran Ways into Work originally were employed by RBWM, then they were separated and became a Community Interest Charity and existed like that for several years and then as the Council's budget changes last year, it was decided that Optalis would become the supported employment provider and Ways into Work would continue to support those people that were currently supported and were eligible for an employment review with Optalis



and Ways into Work were to find alternate ways of funding such as direct funding from DWP. Lisa Hughes explained that the Forum wanted to understand; what had happened to the cohort that had been supported by Way into Work, had funding been found for those people, had the employment review been offered to all the people on the waiting list with all the changes that had taken place.

The Chairman suggested that this item be kept on the agenda.

Dominic Manley informed the Forum that Way into Work had a very informative website that Members could look at.

Peter Haley asked if there would be any impact of Brexit on any funding received. Lisa Hughes commented that there had been European funding that had been received until next year. However, DWP had direct grants for three years from the start of employment. Each local authority were considering how to get funding to get people into employment.

### ITEM - COMMUNITY HUB PROJECT

Peter Haley gave an introduction for this item. Peter Haley reported that some months ago, the contract for supporting the voluntary sector had been moved from WAM getting Involved. This would be run in a slightly different way as to the package that was previously in place. This did not include the impact of Covid and the phenomenal voluntary groups that had stood up and came forward. Peter Haley continued that WAM Get Involved were not funded by RBWM but had continued to support voluntary organisations across the borough and offer training courses and a weekly newsletter.

The community hub had been running about one year and was running at a number of different levels locally. Peter Haley had been involved in Chairing a small meeting of officers from different public sector organisations, who were looking to try and cross fertilize from different initiatives, currently there had been a lot of focus on Covid but there were a number of different projects up and running. The current focus was around west Windsor and the Dedworth area which was soon to end and move to Maidenhead.

Peter Haley was specifically involved in asset-based community development and the Forum was not decision making. There was currently a list of 27 projects that were in need of being taken forward within west Windsor. Funding was being sought for this work.

Lisa Hughes asked if there had been any learnings over the past year that would assist other communities and wards around the borough. Peter Haley replied that he had found that these kinds of things took time to develop, it took time to form links within the public sector but also with the communities. It was essential that community groups had enough time to respond appropriately and get involved. A big challenge was to ensure that people were aware of the opportunities and they knew that they could be involved and how they could be involved. It had been an unusual year with covid and with more people getting involved either because they had been furloughed or had more time and therefore more people had got involved in different projects. This had been the positive of what had been a challenging year.

The Chairman asked Peter Haley for an example to help the Forum understand better. Peter Haley referred to the checklist that was in place for the 27 projects that were currently in place. Peter Haley commented that there were currently five projects at a more developed stage and one of those was to look at sustainable transport within west Windsor and in particular helping people to avoid bike theft was a major point, trying to get people out on buses or car sharing and even electric scooters. Maidenhead Cycle Hub had been involved in trying to get bikes more secure and reduce the bike theft in west Windsor.

**ACTION: Receive an update at next meeting in March 2021.**

## ITEM - RBWM PARKING STRATEGY

Lisa Hughes reported that at the start of November she was alerted to the draft parking strategy and spent a good deal of time reading through it and considering whether it had due regard for the needs of People with Disabilities and/or Older People.

As a result, Lisa Hughes submitted a complaint to the Lead Member for Parking and Director of Adults, Health and Commissioning about the process which hadn't been consultative and only allowed "comment" after the proposed Parking Strategy had been approved. Lisa Hughes also flagged issues, omissions and inaccuracies in the proposed strategy.

Some of the issues would have negatively impacted People with Disabilities and Older People but the strategy proposed no mitigations for these impacts. One such issue related to a proposed resident parking discount that was only available to residents with smartphones. Lisa Hughes reminded RBWM that around 20% of older adults did not have a smartphone so asked how they could claim the discount. RBWM withdrew the proposed residents' discount.

The omissions would result in an incomplete description of the Borough characteristics around age and disability with associated parking needs and parking challenges. Therefore a parking strategy built thereon would not be based on robust information and projections.

The inaccuracies primarily related to eligibility for a Blue Badge.

Disappointingly, few amendments were made to the strategy and it was approved by the Cabinet. However, the Cabinet delegated authority to Hillary Hall and Cllr Cannon to make reasonable minor amendments to the strategy after consideration by an O&S Panel; the two Town Forums and our Forum.

Dominic Manley thanked Lisa Hughes for her continued insight into these areas. Dominic Manley asked if there were any overviews that the Forum could see and read before meetings so that each member had a more detailed insight to be able to comment. Lisa Hughes suggested that she could share the responses that she sent in. Sometimes these come up at real short notice as with the parking strategy.

Peter Haley thanked Lisa Hughes for all her hard efforts. Peter Haley asked if Lisa Hughes made notes on the mail documents which she could highlighted to the Forum. Lisa Hughes suggested that she could send the Forum the Parking Strategy and the response then the Forum could see the points that she had raised. Lisa Hughes suggested that the Forum could feedback back to Lisa Hughes.

The Chairman agreed that it was a good idea to share more information between the meetings.

Dominic Manley reminded the Forum that the Chairman had asked for more participation from Forum Members. Dominic Manley asked if it would be possible to recruit more disabled members who were prepared to be more active within the Forum.

Lisa Hughes informed the Forum that Sharon Bunce had started to takeover the transport and parking issues from Lisa Hughes. The handover was very lengthy as there was a lot of knowledge to try and pick up. It was a good idea for other Forum Members to get involved to prevent the perception that matters raised were the individual view of Lisa Hughes and show the Forum stands as a group that highlights the challenges of a lot of people with disabilities around the borough.

Peter Haley suggested if the new Equalities Officer could assist on this and if this would be included in the new role. Helen Preedy would discuss with the Chairman and Vice Chairman at their meeting in the New Year.

The Chairman pointed out that any specific issues that needed comment were highlighted to Forum Members by both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman.

Neil Walter addressed the Forum to clear up a few points about the Parking Strategy. Neil Walter commented that the strategy was actually 77 pages long, one of the main actions from the recommendations from the strategy was a complete and thorough review of all on-street and off-street blue badge parking which is scheduled to take place between 2021 and 2023. Neil Walter informed the Forum that he was one of the Officers with the responsibility of that action, he would ensure that members of the Forum would be consulted or asked to provide direct input.

### ITEM - CASTLE HILL WINDSOR PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

The Chairman invited Jess Cully, Senior Engagement Consultant, Project Centre, to give a presentation to the Forum. The presentation was attached to the minutes.

Dominic Manley asked if the surface was flat between the buildings currently or if they were currently kerbs on either side. Dominic Manley commented that for the Forum it would be useful to know what was there now and what would be changing specifically issues associated with wheelchair and scooter users, people with reduced sight and ingress and egress from that area.

Lisa Hughes updated the Forum that both her and the Chairman had had a call with the project centre and the people involved in the project at a very early stage. This was not disclosed to anyone as at that point the project was confidential for security reasons. Both Lisa and Angela discussed the project specifically around paving, kerbs, the tactile paving at crossing points and whether the Heritage considerations of the site and accessibility and tactile paving could be addressed. The mortar between the old cobbles would be looked at to see if the difficulties for wheelchair users could be reduced.

The Chairman asked about how taxi's would now turn around on Thames Street and David Scott responded that as part of the revised scheme, the taxi rank was the challenge to how it would relate to the revised scheme. The intention was to avoid Castle Hill being used as a turning point.

Neil White, Principal Landscape Architect, Project Centre, gave a presentation to the Forum. The presentation was attached.

Neil White presented a number of slides to explain the inspiration and materials that would be used along Castle Hill, and the wider area. Neil White explained that the paving materials palette that were to be used on Castle Hill were to be granite within the roads and Yorkstone within the paved areas, confirming all materials would be non-slip, had a flat surface and would be designed to current regulations. Neil White confirmed that the side streets such as Church St, and Market St, would remain as existing to retain the character, with only light remedial works, such as relaying loose cobbles would be undertaken only. It was agreed that where tactile paving was indicated on the general arrangement plan that Yorkstone pimple paving would be used. It was discussed and agreed at the meeting that the raised pedestrian crossing points at Albans St, and at the beginning of Castle Hill near to the statue of Victoria would have no tactile paving. Neil White confirmed that the existing wall seats would remain, but no additional seating was proposed along Castle Hill. The kerb height along Castle Hill was 60mm and additional lighting would be incorporated within Castle Hill.

David Scott left the meeting.

Robin Pemberton commented that there was a serious incline on the slope up to the gates and there was no seating on the plans but there is some on the pictorial. Would there be seating as this was important for people resting there? Neil White commented that the seating

would remain as it currently was which ran alongside the wall of the castle. There would be no additional seating on Castle Hill.

Lisa Hughes confirmed that the use of tactile York stone at the pedestrian crossing would be ok as it was a low traffic area and therefore danger to pedestrians would be minimised. The main concern that Lisa had was the raised pedestrian crossing point at the junction of Thames Street and Castle Hill as cars could still drive into that area, would it be better if some kind of tactile paving or something that would alert pedestrians with visual impairment that they would be crossing a roadway. Neil White commented that the difference in colour of the York stone footpath and the granite roadway would be a contrast. There would be signage for traffic, a continual flow of pedestrians at the crossing and the castle would be staffing the area too. There was a public consultation taking place currently until 10 January 2021. The details would be sent to the Forum Members.

The Chairman thanked all for attending and updating the Forum.

The Chairman alerted Forum Members of a RBWM consultation on the council tax reduction scheme. The Chairman gave a brief background on this.

#### DATE OF NEXT FORUM

The Forum noted that the date of the next Forum would be Monday 15 March 2021 at 11am.

The meeting, which began at 11.00 am, finished at 1.25 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....

Report Title:	Supported Employment Service Transfer-update
Reason for briefing note:	Briefing for Disability and Inclusion Forum – 15 <sup>th</sup> March 2021
Responsible Officer(s):	Laurel Sanderson
Senior Leader Sponsor:	Lynne Lidster
Date:	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2021

## SUMMARY

This paper provides an update for the Disability and Inclusion Forum on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021, outlining progress for the transfer of the Royal Borough's Supported Employment Service from Ways into Work to Optalis Ltd, as well as addressing questions raised from the last meeting (14<sup>th</sup> December 2020).

## BACKGROUND

The Borough commissions a Supported Employment Service (SES) which works with people with different needs but primarily supports people with a learning disability and/ or autism. The service is currently provided by Ways into Work. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the current contract, which has an annual value of £75,000, has been extended under new terms that take into account the different way of working necessitated during this period. The extension enabled continuity of service to people who would be adversely affected by business and industry interruptions. The current extension expires on 31 March 2021.

Full Council in February 2020 agreed to the reshaping of the SES in the Borough and the RBWM/ Optalis Commissioning Board confirmed on 19 January 2021 that the SES will be transferred to Optalis Ltd, RBWM's jointly owned Local Authority Trading Company, with the contract commencing on 1 April 2021. This is in accordance with the Optalis Shareholder's Agreement that provides that the Borough will commission all Adult Social Care Services from Optalis Ltd except where there is a conflict of interest. The annual contract value will remain at £75,000.

## NUMBER OF PEOPLE SUPPORTED

Ways into Work currently provides employment support to approximately 220 people within the Borough; 145 of whom are employed. The funding identified in the paragraph above, specifically provided by the Royal Borough, currently enables 59 of those people to be supported at work. Ways into Work will retain all 220 people as their clients and will continue to work with them into the future, funding the cost of this from other sources of income within their organisation. Ways into Work will continue to operate as a supported employment service provider in the local area.

Ways into Work have a waiting list of approximately 20 people who have not yet received support from them and the intention is that these 20 people, plus approximately 10 open allocated cases who have not yet secured employment, will be offered the opportunity to transfer across to the Optalis SES.

Ways into Work also provides employment support to five people with learning disabilities who work for the Royal Borough's Parks and Countryside Team. These people are directly employed by RBWM and are supported and accompanied by staff from Ways into Work. This service, valued at £12,000 per annum, is unaffected by these proposals so the current arrangements will continue under a separate contract, which will be retained by Ways into Work.

## **NEW SERVICE OFFER**

Optalis has been successfully providing a high-quality Supported Employment Service for Wokingham Borough Council for nearly 20 years. As a long-established service, Optalis SES has a number of well-established relationships with national and local employers in the Royal Borough and a relationship with vulnerable people and their carers known to Adult Social Care. Building relationships with employers in the local area is crucial for successful job matches that lead to recruitment and good retention rates.

The Optalis SES will support adults with a learning disability and/ or autism and who are known to Adult Social Care; Optalis will accept the transfer of anyone not in either of these two client groups to discuss with them the levels of support they need or any appropriate signposting. Work coaches will work with each individual referred to it to assess their needs and develop their vocational profile which details their aspirations and outcomes that they would like to achieve. A tailored action plan will be agreed between the SES work coach and the individual. Optalis Ltd works to the same high standards required by the British Association of Supported Employment (BASE) as we have required from our existing provider and will apply all of the principles of risk assessment for the safety of individuals and staff when assessing and working with individuals and employers.

## **DECOMMISSIONING AND TRANSFER ACTIVITIES**

The decommissioning process, (ending the contract with one provider and starting the contract with the new provider) on hold since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, has been resumed with Ways into Work and is following a plan agreed with the existing provider. An indicative number of people likely to transfer to the new service has been identified as stated above. These people are not yet in work. It has been agreed as part of the decommissioning process that Ways into Work will write to the people likely to transfer to the Optalis SES, with the intention being that they receive a letter towards the end of February. This will detail the change in provider and the change process and will ask for their consent to share their records

held by Ways into Work with Optalis SES, as required by the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The exact number of people to be transferred will be confirmed by the end of February and once people have given their consent, their relevant data will be transferred securely to Optalis in March. Ways into Work and Optalis, as outgoing and incoming providers have both agreed that TUPE regulations do not apply.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Frequent appropriate communications are critical to a successful transfer plan. The Borough and both providers agree that clear and regular communication should give individuals and their families a good experience of the transition helping them to understand the change and the change process. Ways into Work and Optalis SES are preparing communication releases, including updates to their websites with their respective changes in service and Optalis SES has drafted leaflets. Ways into Work will ensure that their transferring clients understand the changes and, once transferred, Optalis SES will make early contact with them. The Optalis communications team is drafting the appropriate communications to the new people who will use the service, as well as to Adult Social Care staff and other stakeholders. The Learning Disability Partnership Board has been made aware of the change in service provider.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The decommissioning and transfer process will continue, which includes regular meetings involving the outcoming and incoming providers. Optalis SES will have the opportunity to see the client data in late March so that they are in a good position to start the contract on 1 April. The decommissioning plan includes lessons learnt and feedback from the providers on the process.

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