

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2020

**PRESENT:** Councillors John Baldwin, Clive Baskerville, Gerry Clark, David Coppinger (Chairman), Geoff Hill, Maureen Hunt, Greg Jones, Ross McWilliams, Gurch Singh, Donna Stimson and Helen Taylor (Vice-Chairman)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simon Bond, Tracey Croucher (Thames Valley Police) and Jeff Pick (Thames Valley Police)

Officers: Mark Beeley, Steph James, Naomi Markham and Fatima Rehman

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Targowski and Councillor Bhangra, Councillor Stimson and Councillor Hunt attended the meeting as substitutes.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hunt declared a personal interest as she owned a property in Maidenhead Town Centre but there was no conflict of interest with any of the items on the agenda.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020 were approved an accurate record.**

### THAMES VALLEY POLICE UPDATE

Inspector Tracey Croucher, Thames Valley Police, updated the Forum with figures on crime in Maidenhead. Overall, the number of incidents that were reported to the police was lower than last year, although lockdown played a significant factor in this. The latest figures on crime were from the period 1<sup>st</sup> September to 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020:

- In Maidenhead Central, there were 7 reported burglaries, down from 14 last year.
- In Maidenhead South, there were 18 reported, down from 28 last year.
- In Maidenhead West, there were 14 reported, which was up from 13 last year.

A lot of hard work had been put into this by the team and there was a good overall picture on the figures. Last weekend, Inspector Tracey Croucher and other colleagues had been invited to the Remembrance Day commemorations and she passed on her thanks to RBWM. TVP had recently taken part in Operation Spectre which was a national initiative designed to tackle knife crime. Updates on the operation could be found on the TVP Windsor and Maidenhead Facebook page.

Considering enforcement of Covid restrictions, Inspector Tracey Croucher explained that the police were still issuing fines for non-compliance. However, this was now in the form of a summons to court which would then decide on the level of the fine, rather than it just being a blanket £10,000 fine. TVP had a 'Covid car' which had been patrolling Maidenhead and was available 24 hours a day. The idea was to try and manage the pressure and allow the neighbourhood teams to respond to any Covid compliance issues. The borough had been very good at complying with the guidance and enforcement had been targeted at the very small minority that disregarded the legislation. The car was an opportunity for TVP to get out into the community and engage with residents.

The Chairman said that one of the PSPOs had been a great help to him and his wife recently when they hosted a Halloween party. Inspector Tracey Croucher said that Halloween had been a wonderful opportunity for people to come together and celebrate the event safely. TVP did not receive many complaints of anti-social behaviour over the period.

Jeff Pick, Community and Engagement Officer, said that TVP were currently promoting a winter burglary campaign designed to make residents aware that they needed to make sure their homes were secure and protected. Before Covid, TVP had been doing home surveys where officers looked at improvements that could be made to the security of a home. Additional security could be installed as part of the survey, with the help of Neighbourhood Watch. It was hoped that this would be restarted in the near future.

Regarding fireworks, the rules and regulations surrounding them had not changed since 2004. Between 11pm and 7am no fireworks were allowed to be set off, with a midnight cut off for some special events. Information and guidance would be circulated to members of the Forum after the meeting.

The Chairman said that in his view there had been less fireworks this year but he had received a number of emails from residents who wanted to see more restrictions.

Councillor Baskerville asked a number of questions:

- What powers did the police have to enforce firework regulations?
- During Operation Spectre, how many knives did the police seize?
- How many people had been taken to court so far over a breach of Covid restrictions?

Jeff Pick said that enforcement came in the form of warnings or fines that could be issued, but it was often hard to locate exactly where a firework had been set off from. A knife bin had been put in Maidenhead police station along with numerous sweeps of various parks across the borough, but no knives had been located. Further information on this operation was available on the TVP Windsor and Maidenhead Facebook page.

Inspector Tracey Croucher said that they did not know the number of people taken to court, once a ticket had been issued it was in the hands of the court and the police played no further role.

Councillor Stimson, Lead Member for Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside, passed on her thanks to the team for all their hard work. She said they had been able to facilitate people having fun whilst ensuring that everyone was kept safe. Inspector Tracey Croucher thanked Councillor Stimson for her support and kind words.

Councillor G Jones asked if the spy hole services were provided free of charge. Jeff Pick confirmed that they were, with different types available which could help elderly residents in particular. There was a local builder that volunteered his services free of charge. Jeff Pick also recommended that video doorbells be installed as they could provide vital footage of streets and cars and could be used as evidence if any crimes had been committed.

Councillor Baldwin said that there had been 88 stop and searches recorded by TVP in Maidenhead, with 24 arrests. This seemed like a very high arrest figure and asked why this was the case.

Inspector Tracey Croucher explained that the stop and search power was under scrutiny at all times to ensure that it was being used correctly and legally. Stop and search was an intelligence led tool available to TVP, which was based on both people and location. This also was the same for vehicles, information would be used to stop a vehicle if it was deemed a crime could be committed or there was reason to search the vehicle.

## WASTE COLLECTION UPDATE

Naomi Markham, Waste Strategy Manager at RBWM, explained to the Forum how missed bins could be reported. There was an online 'Report it' tool available on the RBWM website where a request to collect a missed bin could be submitted. Any missed bins needed to be reported within two days of the collection date and RBWM would return within two days of the request being received to empty the missed bin. There was a new form as the website had recently been updated. Once the details on the form had been filled out, the preview button allowed the resident to review the information they had submitted before it was sent to RBWM. Once submitted, the request had a reference number that was emailed to the resident, if there were any issues with the submission then the resident would be emailed using the address that they submitted as part of the form.

Alternatively, residents could call the RBWM Customer Service Centre. By selecting the 'waste' option, the caller would be put through to Serco who would be able to deal with the request from there. Recently, the number of issues with collections had been reduced and the service was now running more smoothly.

The Chairman said that the team had worked hard to fix things and get the service back up to the level expected by residents.

Councillor Singh also passed on his thanks to the team, but said that he had received communication from residents who found the website interface confusing. He asked if the interface could be made more user-friendly.

Naomi Markham said that the website was run the Communications Team, so she would raise it with them to see if anything could be done.

Councillor Hill said that he had heard of rat infestations occurring due to the number of bins that had not been collected. Naomi Markham was not aware of any cases of this being a direct consequence of the missed bins. The Chairman said that there was a rat issue in many parts of Maidenhead but would look into it and see what could be done.

Councillor Singh agreed with Councillor Hill and said that he had seen evidence of rats in parks and around some flat bins. He would discuss the issue with the Chairman and officers after the meeting.

## TOWN MANAGER UPDATE

Steph James, Maidenhead Town Manager, explained that many businesses were currently in a difficult position. More businesses were now able to offer takeaway services, which was something that they could not offer during the first lockdown. Grant funding had also been made available by the government, with information available on the RBWM website. Footfall in the town centre in October had been 34% down on last year but was not lower than the national average. There were currently 38 empty retail units, which had risen by four units since December 2019, with Tesco, Poundstretcher and Monsoon being some of the businesses to vacate their premises. While the number of empty shops was increasing, an application had now been submitted for the Nicolson's Centre and an application had been approved at the old Post Office site. Parking was 51% down year on year, with the most popular areas for parking currently being West Street and the Landing.

The York Road development was now nearing completion with the marketing suite now open and a number of properties at the site now on the market. A consultation was now underway on the Magnet Leisure Centre, with the St Clouds Way website outlining the potential proposals, while a public consultation would also be held later this month on the Nicolson's Centre application.

On social media, Make Maidenhead had enjoyed strong levels of engagement, with 'Shop local, support local' also being a success. Councillor Taylor had set up an online auction market which was showcasing the talent available in Maidenhead and across the borough. Looking forward to Christmas, the lights would be switched on at the weekend (21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> November) and Steph James wanted to ensure that Christmas would still be special in the town. She wanted residents to share pictures of their decorated homes with a competition for the best pictures, details would be announced shortly.

Councillor Hill asked if there would be free parking in Maidenhead in the run up to Christmas. Steph James said that she was not sure at the moment, the Chairman said that if any decision was taken they would let Members and residents know.

Councillor Singh said that there were some extra free spaces recently implemented in Bridge Avenue, but there was another area of his ward which could do with more parking by using a lay-by located close to shops and businesses.

Steph James said that she was happy to go on a walk to explore the area with Councillor Singh and see what could be done. Councillor Clark, Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure, said that he was also very happy to assist in any way, he said that he was against having parking restrictions where they were not necessary.

The Chairman asked Councillor Clark if he would be able to update the Forum and residents on the major works that would be taking place around Maidenhead. Councillor Clark said that six major junctions had been identified that needed to be upgraded. The work had been scoped and the Local Enterprise Partnership had identified funding for the works, which would commence in the next few weeks.

Councillor McWilliams asked how RBWM was engaging with businesses to understand their optimism and how they would like to receive support. It was important for businesses to survive and eventually thrive so that the economy would be able to recover.

Steph James said there was a lot of optimism as businesses were adapting to the circumstances and new businesses were being created to take advantage of any new gaps in the market. Residents had done a good job in supporting local businesses over the summer and there should be a focus on the future of Maidenhead. Receiving information from businesses was something that could be worked on, especially as there was not a central database containing information on all businesses in the borough. It was important that RBWM was able to engage and communicate effectively with its business community.

Councillor McWilliams agreed that a database was an important piece of work. He mentioned affordable work space and was not aware if it was included as part of Areli's plans for the Nicolson's Centre. He asked if representations had been made to Areli.

Steph James said it was something that Areli had considered, an area of the centre would be called 'The Yards' and would allow grassroots businesses to be set up.

Councillor Baldwin said that he had been involved with deliveries for Maidenhead Food Share and asked what would need to happen to have a local traffic management system in Maidenhead and things like local traffic orders. There were issues with the number of cars in the area and the safety of volunteers who helped at the food share.

Steph James said that this would be taken away and looked at. She was appreciative of the great work that Maidenhead Food Share were doing and wanted to make it as easy as possible for them. Councillor Clark agreed with these comments and recommended that contact with officers be made, he would be happy to help with this.

Councillor McWilliams suggested to Councillor Baldwin that he discuss the food share with Areli, who were the company behind the Nicolson's Shopping Centre redevelopment, as they had supported charities in the past and might be able to help with Maidenhead Food Share.

Councillor Baldwin said that he had spoken to Areli but would take this issue offline to discuss with the Chairman, Lead Members and Officers further. He said that it was important that the logistical issues were understood and that the safety of those working at the food share was protected.

Councillor Singh asked if there would be a nightclub included in the redevelopment plans, like Smokey Joes. Steph James said that she did not know if there would be at the moment but hoped that a venue like Smokey Joes would be part of the town centre again.

### ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

Councillor Baldwin said that he had made contact with the Chairman of the Hindu Society, it was important to ensure that they had a Community Centre which they could use. He would send across the contact details of the society to the Chairman.

Councillor McWilliams suggested having an item on Maidenhead Food Share following the discussion on the subject during the last agenda item. He also said it might be good to have an update from Barbara Richardson, Managing Director of RBWM Property Company Ltd, on the Nicolson's Shopping Centre before it went to the Planning Panel for consideration.

Ed Wilson, a resident of RBWM, suggested some items that the Forum could look at:

- On a walk around the Furze Platt area of Maidenhead, Ed Wilson had not noticed any Community Warden activity. He suggested an item discussing the impact of Community Wardens in Maidenhead.
- There were a number of street signs that needed work around the town, which could be another item.
- The impact of HMOs (House of Multiple Occupants) in Maidenhead and their impact.

### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting, which began at 6.15 pm, finished at 7.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....