

MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

MONDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2021

PRESENT: Councillors David Coppinger (Chairman), Helen Taylor (Vice-Chairman), Phil Haseler, Clive Baskerville, Gurpreet Bhangra, Ross McWilliams, Chris Targowski, John Baldwin, Gerry Clark and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance: Councillors Simon Werner, Catherine del Campo, Stuart Carroll, Donna Stimson, David Cannon and Samantha Rayner

Officers: Mark Beeley, Shilpa Manek and Tim Golabek

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received from Councillor G Jones, with Councillor Haseler attending the meeting as a substitute. Councillor Targowski had notified the clerk that he would be joining the meeting late.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

While he was not a Forum member, Councillor Carroll declared a personal interest as he worked for a pharmaceutical company, Sanofi Pasteur. Councillor Carroll declared his employment in the interests of full transparency and to highlight that should for any reason during the meeting the Forum discussed anything directly related to Sanofi Pasteur's business he would abstain from the discussion and leave the room as required. The Chairman also declared another personal interest as he was currently working as a policy advisor on the governments vaccine task force.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health, gave the Forum an update on the latest Covid-19 data. He discussed the latest data for RBWM which covered the period 20th-26th January 2021 and the comparisons to both the previous 7 day period and also other local authorities. The rate during the period at the end of January was 372.9 per 100,000, which was slightly down on the previous week. It was pleasing to also see the number of cases in the 60+ age category decrease, which was probably due to the lockdown restriction measures and also good compliance by the public for the rules.

A graph showed the weekly rate of confirmed cases, with the number across the region declining. There was also data available that had been broken down into ward level, with Clewer East and Furze Platt the wards with the highest rates at the time the data was collected. The Outbreak Engagement Board, which had recently started holding its alternative meeting each month in public, was looking at the ward data weekly and investigating if there were any gaps in communication.

Councillor Targowski and Councillor Rayner joined the meeting.

Councillor Carroll moved on to the number of deaths that had been reported. The number of daily admissions to hospitals was starting to level out which was positive compared to December and earlier in January when there was a steady increase in admissions. The vaccine programme had been progressing well in RBWM, with 76,000 total doses given to date in the Frimley Health and Care Integrated Care System.

The Chairman said that he had recently been invited for his first vaccine appointment. The organisation was excellent and had been very smooth, he thanked everyone involved with the programme.

Councillor Baskerville mentioned that there was one vaccine centre for Maidenhead and also one for Windsor. He asked if anymore centres would be set up.

Councillor Carroll said it was difficult to compare different areas and their number of vaccine centres as it depended on the number of people and the viability of potential sites. RBWM was on target for its vaccinations, with a significant number being in care homes. This meant that NHS staff needed to travel to the location to administer the vaccine. Work was starting to be done on enlisting pharmacies to administer the vaccine going forward. Councillor Carroll encouraged residents to book an appointment once invited to do so by the NHS.

Councillor Haseler asked about the South African variant of the virus, which was currently a concern. He asked if there were any known cases in RBWM and if the support was in place for door to door testing which had been seen in regions where the new variant had been detected.

Councillor Carroll said that it was something that had been discussed at the Outbreak Engagement Board earlier in the day and was currently being checked by Public Health England, any potential cases needed to be validated. The vaccine should be effective against this variant but the percentage of protection offered was not currently known.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Carroll for attending the meeting and updating the Forum on the latest data.

At the conclusion of the item, Councillor Carroll left the meeting.

MAIDENHEAD CYCLE ROUTES

Derek Wilson, Chairman of the Windsor and Maidenhead Cycling Action Group, gave an update on the activity of the group. He explained that the group was a continuation of the now disbanded RBWM Cycling Forum and used 'Windsor and Maidenhead' rather than RBWM as it was not an official council meeting. The action group currently had around 30 members and were holding virtual meetings. Cycling matters were discussed and it had been useful to continue holding meetings throughout the pandemic. In January 2019, RBWM adopted the Cycling Action Plan.

Considering the tranche one funding, the council had implemented temporary measures during the first lockdown, for example extending footpaths. Tranche two had involved a £761,000 bid submitted by RBWM to the government for funding to make these measures permanent, with £335,000 being received. Tim Golabek, Service Lead – Transport and Infrastructure, had attended the last cycling action group meeting to discuss the proposals with some members supporting the plans but also some being against them. Regarding the roundabouts upgrade project, the action plan highlighted ideas for better connectivity from the north of the town all the through to the south. However, the speed on roundabouts was something that needed to be considered. Derek Wilson was thankful to the Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure, Councillor Clark, for attending a number of the groups meetings.

Councillor Baldwin complimented the work of the group and said that it had a depth of experience across the borough. It was important that there was a borough wide view of cycling issues so that RBWM was aware of what issues were important to cyclists.

Councillor Baskerville asked if members of the cycling action group still visited schools to do things like cycling proficiency for students.

Derek Wilson said that there was an officer who was particularly involved in activities with schools. Members who were involved with activities were supported by the group and it was hoped that more could be done once lockdown restrictions were relaxed.

Councillor Singh commented on the north/side divide in Maidenhead and it was important that projects that were focussed on improving connectivity for cyclists were explored. He asked if cycle lanes could be incorporated into the roundabouts that would be upgraded and for any views on the proposed bus gate outside Maidenhead Station.

Derek Wilson explained that it was not something that he could comment on other than what was in the action plan. On the proposed bus gate, members of the group were split on the issue and members would be responding individually to the consultation.

Councillor Baldwin said that the plans for Maidenhead Station proposed relocating the cycle storage further down towards the clock tower. A resident had expressed concern about the potential new location as they believed it was less secure and the crime figures would transfer from British Transport Police to Thames Valley Police which could cause problems.

ROUNDBABOUTS UPGRADE UPDATE

Tim Golabek, Service Lead – Transport and Infrastructure, said that the project was known as the 'housing sites enablement works'. It was being funded by the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership and formed part of the borough local plan. Works were ongoing, with one roundabout being completed and work on site at a number of others:

- Stafferton Way – work was now complete but resurfacing work was due to take place in March 2021.
- Ray Mill Road West – work was due to start on 8th February 2021.
- Oldfield Road junction – work was due to start by the end of February 2021 and was scheduled to take a couple of months.
- Castle Hill – due to start in March 2021.
- Braywick Road – discussions were still ongoing as work needed to coincide with the work on the M4, which was in the process of being upgraded to a smart motorway.

Councillor Taylor asked if the work on Stafferton Way roundabout was going to be a full resurface or just filling in the potholes. She also commented on the scheduling of the work and if several projects were taking place at the same time there could be problems with traffic across Maidenhead.

Tim Golabek said that he thought it was a full resurfacing but would double check this after the meeting. Officers did not want any gridlock to be caused by the work and had worked closely with officers who were in control of highways. The ongoing work to Maidenhead Station had also been taken into account.

Councillor Baldwin asked if the Stafferton Way and Braywick Road roundabouts had been influenced at all by the closure of the right turn out of Queen Street in the town centre.

Tim Golabek said that he would take the question away and provide Councillor Baldwin with an answer in due course.

Councillor Taylor asked if the Maidenhead missing links project would be complete before the roundabouts work was started.

Tim Golabek said that consideration had been made so that the missing links project could continue alongside the roundabout work but not directly at the same time.

Councillor Singh assumed that the roundabouts would be able to take extra capacity but in the post Covid world traffic levels could be different. He asked if this had been considered by officers.

Tim Golabek explained that currently the long term impact of Covid was not yet known. The project was signed off some time ago but new projects going forward would be mindful of the Covid impact.

Councillor Taylor asked if it would be possible to convert the roundabouts to include cycle lanes in future if it was required.

Tim Golabek confirmed that this project was at the delivery stage and work would be done in future to understand what the best way to use road space would be. Cycle improvements were something that could be explored but it was important to consider that roundabouts were about efficiency.

The Chairman said that this project was not about today's traffic, it was looking towards the future particularly when there was estimated to be a significant increase in residents living in Maidenhead over the next few years.

Ian Rose, a member of the public, said that he believed cyclists wanted to avoid using the roundabouts. He said the focus should be on the missing links routes.

MAIDENHEAD FOOD SHARE

Councillor Baldwin explained that he had volunteered for Food Share Maidenhead a number of times over the past three years. The organisations clients were referred directly by partner organisations and the Food Share was staffed by a team of volunteers. They have received financial support and PPE equipment from RBWM which was gratefully received. However, there were logistical issues going forward with where the Food Share was based. Areli had been very helpful in letting the Food Share use the old Argos unit and more recently the old Tesco unit in the Nicolson's Shopping Centre. Access to the Food Share could be gained at the back of the building, with Vulca kindly providing the outdoor lighting for the pre-Christmas distribution. Around 220 families in Maidenhead had routinely received food parcels and there was also regular attendance from those that were currently homeless. Councillor Baldwin said that it was pleasing to see a number of other councillors had also been involved with the Food Share and helped to create a spirit of generosity and community. It was the responsibility of all councillors to make sure their residents had access to food and other essential items.

Councillor Singh asked Councillor Baldwin where he saw Food Share Maidenhead moving to in the future, particularly with the plans by Areli to develop the Nicolson's Shopping Centre.

Councillor Baldwin said that Areli had been very supportive and generous but a decision would need to be made on a permanent site in the future. He suggested that Councillor Coppinger, as Lead Member for Maidenhead, and Councillor Johnson, as Leader of the Council, could discuss the situation with Food Share Maidenhead which would be appreciated.

The Chairman said that Food Share Maidenhead was essential and many people depended on it. He said that it was important the organisation had a permanent site to distribute food to residents in future.

Councillor McWilliams said that the lighting in the car park outside the Nicolson's Centre was not great but RBWM was looking at getting it fixed. It would be useful to see the application from Areli once it was submitted and go from there. Work was underway to identify a new potential home for the Food Share. Councillor McWilliams suggested that it would be good to have this item back on the agenda for future meetings of the Forum.

Councillor Baldwin said that this was reassuring to hear that discussions had been started and thanked Councillor McWilliams for his contributions to the Food Share.

ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

Councillor McWilliams suggested an update on regeneration in Maidenhead, particularly on the Landings site and what the proposals were.

The Chairman said that it was hoped there were be better idea of the Nicolson's Shopping Centre application from Areli by the date of the next meeting of the Forum at the end of March.

Councillor Baskerville said it would be good to have an update from local sports clubs on how they were coping during the pandemic.

Councillor Stimson said that the community engagement project currently underway in Dedworth and Clewer would soon be moving to include Maidenhead Town Centre. An item on this could be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Councillor Singh said that it was important that Forum meetings had engagement from residents. He asked why comments had been turned off on the live chat on the YouTube channel. Mark Beeley, Democratic Services Officer, provided Councillor Singh with a written response to this after the meeting.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members of the Forum noted that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 31st March 2021.

The meeting, which began at 6.15 pm, finished at 7.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....