

## WINDSOR TOWN FORUM

THURSDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2021

PRESENT: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Samantha Rayner (Vice-Chairman), Christine Bateson, David Cannon, Karen Davies, Shamsul Shelim, Amy Tisi, David Hilton, Wisdom Da Costa and Carole Da Costa

Also in attendance: Councillor Gerry Clark and Councillor Ross McWilliams

Officers: Paul Roach, David Cook and Emma Duncan

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from both Councillor Davey and Councillor Price. Councillor Wisdom Da Costa and Councillor Carole Da Costa acted as substitutes.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

### MINUTES

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021 be approved as a true and accurate record.**

### HOMELESS PROJECT

Nick Roberts (Windsor Homeless Project) informed the Forum that over the last 2 or 3 years, there was a realisation that more room and resources had been needed to support the homeless community. The charity named Windsor Homeless Project was in the process of exchanging contracts with the Church of England to have the property of Alma road, be put into their name.

Nick Roberts stated that this would benefit the Windsor community through multiple different projects including:

- The Homeless Project
- Street Angels
- More than a Shelter
- Food Share

Nick Roberts stated that this would be very beneficial for projects such as Food share, as a central Windsor location would be better for the increased number of visitors that they had been receiving. There have been 2,700 visits between September 2020 and August 2021.

Nick Roberts stated that the new building, accompanied with the café, would allow for people to gain key life skills, and give some individuals a platform to enter paid employment. This would be done through a trainee programme.

Nick Roberts acknowledged that the building needed work to maintain standards and there had been support from the RBWM with this. Fundraising would be required to further these developments and works.

The Chairman asked how many days per week this would be in operation.

Nick Roberts said that the homeless drop-in would be Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays with lunch on Saturdays. Tuesdays and Thursdays, the café would be open to the public, where volunteers would run it and earnings are used to fund the charity. The lease would allow for 7-day ownership per week.

Councillor Rayner asked where staff will be recruited from. Nick Roberts said that currently the plan was to recruit volunteers, and staff already employed. Further discussions are to be had once the lease on the building is confirmed.

Councillor Rayner also asked if this model had been seen by Nick Roberts before in other boroughs.

Nick Roberts said that he had seen similarities in Watford, but it differed slightly. The training programme was identified as setting it apart from other borough's programmes.

Councillor Tisi asked if Nick Roberts was in touch with the Green Room School, as they had similar focusses regarding work and if any ideas for fundraising had been discussed.

Nick Roberts confirmed he had spoken with members from the school and would share ideas closely with them. Also, a fundraising event would be going ahead on the 15<sup>th</sup> October.

Councillor Carole Da Costa asked if Nick Roberts was in contact with community workers in other areas. Nick Roberts stressed that this was his wish, however meeting clashes and limited staff numbers made this difficult to do.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa asked in general if the homeless people who attend the centre are interested in going into employment and how many people are expected to come from Windsor.

Nick Roberts said that most people he worked with did have the desire to get back to work, although acknowledged it came with its difficulties. Most people did come from Windsor; however, anybody would be welcomed.

Councillor McWilliams asked for an update on the demand on services since the end of the eviction ban and what links there were to the rough sleeper's pathway. Nick Roberts said that he had no involvement with certain meetings with other plans but noted that more still needed to be done.

Councillor Bateson asked what the general age group was. Nick Roberts stated that in Windsor, the main demographic was male and aged between 35 and 60.

Councillor Shelim thanked Nick Roberts for all he was doing for the homeless community. Nick Roberts thanked him for his support.

## THAMES VALLEY POLICE UPDATE

Jeffrey Pick (Thames Valley Police) introduced the crime statistics for the month of August. The only one of concern that was identified was the climber who stole a watch. This was due to resident not alarming the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and only the ground floor. Cars left unlocked were identified as being very high.

A jaguar car was stolen and tracked as far as Staines. It then vanished and may have been placed into a container. Stolen bikes are also identified as being a big problem.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa asked how the statistics compared to this time last year and what happened to stolen bikes. Jeffrey Pick said that he was unaware as to what happened to the bikes and due to the pandemic, the statistics for last year were hard to compare.

Councillor Hilton stated that in the South of the borough, dwelling burglaries were quite low, however motor car thefts were the most common. Jeffrey Pick said that people who left valuables on display in cars were often sent letters warning them of the risks of this.

Councillor Tisi asked what type of bike locks are most recommended. Jeffrey Pick informed that it was difficult to say as both cheap and expensive locks had their potential issues.

Councillor Rayner asked Jeffrey Pick if she was able to have access to the leaflets on bike thefts. Jeffrey Pick said that this would be addressed offline.

**ACTION: Circulate bike theft leaflets to members.**

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa asked what the age range seemed to be for bike thieves. Jeffrey Pick stated that it was primarily 15-20 years old.

Jeffrey Pick began to discuss community speed watch. He said that from the 1<sup>st</sup> October, the police would no longer be involved with this process. The PCC had decided that community speed watch must belong to the community. A new website will go live on 1<sup>st</sup> October and if communities desire a speed watch on their road, then they may apply to this through this website. A group must be created on that road to organise this.

The pilot trial in Bourne End, saw this occur 3 times a day, 5 days a week with over 1,000 speeding letters issued. Equipment is given to the communities for 6 months.

Councillor Cannon stated that there was a concern from residents towards speeding cars. This new scheme allowed for communities to address this. Councillor Hilton asked what the cost was of the speed guns. Jeffrey Pick said that this cost £150. The Neighbourhood watch were not allowed to be given the equipment.

The Chairman asked what can be done regarding noise issues and exhausts from motor vehicles. Jeffrey Pick stated that he asked the borough if this could come under anti-social behaviour, but unfortunately it could not.

## TOWN MANAGER UPDATE

Paul Roach (Windsor & Eton Town Centre Manager) stated that most Windsor town centre's shops had re-opened, however some remained closed. The Hello Lamppost project had over 4,500 interactions over the last month, providing good insight as to why the public are there. There were plans to extend this to areas such as Dedworth and Maidenhead.

Paul Roach said that footfall in Windsor town centre had increased, it was still slightly under the levels of 2019, however, was increasing. Coach and Car park attendance was also up, although still lower than past figures due to a lower number of international visitors.

- Smaller areas such as Ascot, Eton, Dedworth at a vacancy rate of between 3-6%
- Windsor at 10%, significantly lower than national average of 14.5-15%

Paul Roach said that around 8 new businesses will be opening in Windsor town centre soon, which will positively change the vacancy rate.

No new information on the Harte and Garter hotel moving anywhere this year. The Ivy restaurant shall also be staying as it is for the time being.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa asked what the general dwell times were for car parks in the town centre. Paul Roach said that information could be available when and if required.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa also asked if business turnovers were returning to buoyant levels. Paul Roach said that most businesses were shy at disclosing this, however several businesses had been performing well, including restaurants.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa asked if there was a direct contact of landlords in Windsor now. Paul Roach said that a Landlord's list was started last year, and is added to all the time, however it is not complete.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa asked a supplementary question on if there were any plans by the council such as a visit Windsor campaign to support businesses.

Paul Roach stated that the launch of the 'My Royal Borough' website had seen a significant improvement in communication with businesses. The 'Don't let your guard down' campaign had also been given a lot of support.

Councillor Tisi asked what the borough was doing to help small businesses start up from their homes and online, to the high street.

Paul Roach said that promotional stands were being encouraged by decreasing the fees to do so. Paul Roach also said that getting businesses to help each other was key, with advertising in empty shop windows for example.

Councillor Davies asked for further information regarding themes from the Hello Lamppost campaign and if it registered where visitors came from.

Paul Roach said that the questions are customised depending on what the object is and that it cannot register where visitors have come from. Future locations can be tweaked and optimised for the best results.

Councillor Rayner asked what the footfall level was for August.

Paul Roach said that:

- Windsor Town Centre was 18% up compared to 2020.
- 6% down compared to August 2019.
- In the last 52 weeks, 5 million people had been through Windsor town centre.

Ed Wilson asked what the difference was between users and individuals, with regards to the Hello Lamppost campaign.

Paul Roach replied by clarifying that:

- 4,400 individuals had interacted with the campaign.
- 819 users had come back multiple times to use the campaign.

Ed Wilson asked the lead member where the funds were being obtained from for this campaign.

Councillor Rayner clarified that this was not funded through council tax and was instead part of the covid recovery plan to encourage engagement and improve communication between the borough and the residents. Paul Roach reiterated that it was a new way of communicating with people.

Claire Milne asked if there were any plans regarding the footbridge between the coach park and the station.

Paul Roach said that a small amount of money had been identified and that hopefully by next Spring, some actions will be taken towards tackling this issue. It was then clarified that the bridge was owned by Network Rail but was maintained by the council.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa asked if there was a plan regarding 5G coverage and how the night-time economy was coping post-pandemic. Paul Roach was unable to answer with confidence regarding plans for 5G coverage.

Paul Roach said that increased lighting had been provided on Goswell Hill and one of the empty archways, had been secured using railings to deter people. Discussions had been undertaken with various late-night businesses, ensuring everything was being done that could be to reduce anti-social behaviour.

The Chairman said that jubilee events would take place next year for the royal household and that the changing of the guard had returned recently to the town. The Chairman also said that royal events always attract visitors and increase footfall to the town.

The Chairman said that there was potentially a 5G mast by the Windsor Leisure Centre, which could suggest coverage for Windsor. With relation to the arches, the Chairman said that around 18/24 months ago, Network Rail sold the arches to a private consortium.

Jeffery Pick said that Thames Valley Police were checking licenses of night-time economy practices.

Councillor Rayner stated that any issues with the night-time economy were dealt with very quickly by the council, Thames Valley Police, and residents, which made visitors to Windsor feel safer.

Paul Roach said finally that a borough-wide Christmas programme was delivered electronically to residents previously. This year the plan was for a printed version to be distributed to all households within the borough.

## WINDSOR CONSULTATIONS

The Chairman asked the forum if anybody had any questions regarding the consultations.

Councillor Tisi asked if as agreed at the last meeting, the details of any consultations were sent to Jeffrey Pick for him to add into the newsletter.

Jeffrey Pick confirmed that he added these into the bottom of the newsletter once a month, if relevant.

Claire Milne asked about the borough's neighbourhood plan and asked about Windsor and how residents would be notified.

Councillor Hilton said that there was no concern and that a neighbourhood plan had been in place since 2014 and that any monies that were attributed to individual neighbourhood plan areas would be recorded separately as an obligation.

## WORK PROGRAMME

The Clerk informed the Chairman as to what items were currently on the work programme for the forum.

The Chairman stated that questions received from residents were more suitable to other panels such as the Full Council and Overview and Scrutiny panels for discussion. A response was given by the Chairman and the questions would be reviewed again to assess the suitability of them for the forum.

Councillor Tisi suggested that resident parking could be combined with parking charges, to make into one singular item on the agenda for the next meeting. This was in reference to a question received from a resident with regards to parking.

The Chairman replied by stating that he had forwarded this to an appropriate body, as it was an issue across Windsor and not just in this isolated area.

Councillor Tisi acknowledged this and emphasised the importance of it being discussed as this was a concern of numerous residents, and not just this one isolated incident.

Councillor Cannon said that there was a parking review underway by a specialist and views were being listened too, but answers were not fully available at this stage.

**ACTION: Resident parking to be discussed at next meeting.**

Ed Wilson said that local cemeteries needed to be looked at, due to resident complaints with what the Council were doing with cemeteries.

The Chairman stated that this would be presented at the Communities Overview & Scrutiny panel, with results being discussed at the forum in due course.

**ACTION: Cemeteries to be discussed at next meeting.**

**ACTION: HMO's to be discussed at next meeting.**

**DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

16<sup>th</sup> November 2021

13<sup>th</sup> January 2022

8<sup>th</sup> March 2022

17<sup>th</sup> May 2022

The meeting, which began at 6.15 pm, finished at 9.00 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....