

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

THURSDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2021

PRESENT: Councillors David Coppinger (Chairman), Helen Taylor (Vice-Chairman), Gurpreet Bhangra, Clive Baskerville, Phil Haseler, John Baldwin, Jon Davey, Greg Jones, Gerry Clark and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance: Councillor John Bowden and Lorna Collisson (Housing Solutions)

Officers: Steph James, Robyn Bunyan, Neil Walter and Mark Beeley

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hill and Councillor Targowski. Councillor Davey and Councillor Haseler were attending the meeting as substitutes.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were approved.**

### HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Lorna Collisson, Community Engagement Officer – Housing Solutions, explained that Housing Solutions was a local housing association which primarily focused on the Maidenhead area. There were around 160 members of staff and most services were run in house. Housing Solutions provided a mix of tenures, including market rent and affordable housing. There were homeowners, leaseholders and extra care properties all part of the portfolio of housing. Housing Solutions had other properties in East Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, but all within an hour of Maidenhead. The corporate strategy had recently been confirmed, which outlined the position of the company over the next 5 years. The strategy was centred around three key themes; safe, satisfied and sustainable. It was important to ensure that all residents felt safe, both mentally and physically. Housing Solutions wanted residents to feel satisfied that they were receiving excellent value for money. There was a lot of work ongoing around the green agenda and trying to hit government targets on things like carbon neutral homes.

A new Director of Resident Services had recently been appointed and it was anticipated that they would bolster the good work that had already taken place. A 'getting to know you' event had recently taken place with residents, which allowed staff and residents to get to know each other better. 850 residents had been engaged with and a number of actions had been received as a result. In November 2020, a new housing team was recruited which consisted of an income team and a resident team. Residents were at the heart of Housing Solutions and engagement was key, there were a number of different Panels that residents could be part of, for example the scrutiny panel, where residents had the opportunity to scrutinise policy and challenge decisions. Two panels related to residents groups and there was an e-engagement panel which had around 100 residents.

Councillor Baldwin joined the meeting.

Lorna Collisson explained that Councillor Taylor had visited Housing Solutions and seen how they operated. The housing association worked with a number of different partners, including RBWM. There were plans to launch a job club in the next few months, while work had been done with the transformation team at RBWM and in particular working in collaboration with the embedding community response project.

The Chairman thanked Lorna Collisson for the presentation and said that he had worked with Housing Solutions in his previous Cabinet Member role.

Councillor Baldwin apologised for joining the meeting late, he had been on the phone to a resident. He said it would be great to catch up with Lorna Collisson after the meeting.

Councillor G Jones said that the government was planning to change the law on Energy Performance Certificates (EPC), from 2025 a rental property would need to have an EPC C grade rating. This would cause some issues for landlords and Councillor G Jones asked if this was something that would be an issue for Housing Solutions.

Lorna Collisson said that the majority of the stock was up to standard but there were some properties that were not. The surveying team would be investigating and Housing Solutions would look to work with residents who were in lower rated homes to see if they could be moved while work took place. Lorna Collisson said that she would be happy to ask the surveying team to see if they could provide a further response.

**ACTION – Lorna Collisson to ask the surveying team if there is a more detailed response to the question from Councillor G Jones.**

Councillor G Jones asked how long the waiting list was at the moment.

Lorna Collisson confirmed that there was a huge waiting list for social housing, as all of Housing Solutions' properties were full. For Band C/D, the wait was around 10 years.

The Chairman said that this was why the Borough Local Plan was needed, so that the amount of social housing in the borough could be increased.

Councillor Singh commented on a news article which mentioned the 'shambles' at Trinity Place, which was a property owned by Housing Solutions. A resident had been trapped in a lift and the emergency number given by Housing Solutions did not work, the resident had to call the fire brigade to get help. There had also been complaints about the cleanliness of Trinity Place, Councillor Singh asked if the issues at this property had been rectified.

Lorna Collisson said that Housing Solutions was aware of the incident and was sorry for the distress that had been caused. Trinity Place was owned by a managing agent and some of the issues had occurred during the handover to Housing Solutions. The lift problems were being dealt with and rectified.

**ACTION – Lorna Collisson to provide Councillor Singh with further information on Trinity Place after the meeting.**

Councillor Singh said the community action days were a good idea. He asked if there were any further socialising days planned by Housing Solutions.

Lorna Collisson confirmed that this was something the team were working on, if there were any dates for any specific blocks, Lorna Collisson said that she was happy to confirm these with Councillor Singh outside the meeting.

Councillor Baskerville said that there was a shortage of social housing and asked if there was a figure available.

He was informed that a specific figure was not available, the waiting list was managed by RBWM. The RBWM Housing team would be best placed to answer this question as they had an overview of the situation across Maidenhead as a whole, which would include other housing associations and not just Housing Solutions.

Councillor Davey said that the 10 year waiting list figure sounded daunting but asked how long residents usually stayed in a property for.

Lorna Collisson said that it did depend on the circumstances and how they changed over time. Mutual exchanges were also possible if two residents were happy to swap.

Councillor Davey asked if Housing Solutions was working with other housing associations.

Lorna Collisson confirmed that they were, all housing associations worked off the same waiting list.

Councillor Baldwin commented on nomination rights and said that they were written in at the development stage. He asked how nominations rights changed as occupancy changed.

Lorna Collisson said that RBWM had 80% of Housing Solutions stock. The nomination rights did not reduce on the third or fourth time of the property coming up, the nomination would remain with RBWM. Lorna Collisson said that she would check with the Head of Housing at Housing Solutions to confirm.

**ACTION – Lorna Collisson to check with the Head of Housing at Housing Solutions and report back to Members of the Forum.**

Councillor Taylor said that Housing Solutions had a spreadsheet with the contact details of officers across the organisation, she asked if an updated version of this contact list could be circulated.

**ACTION – Lorna Collisson to provide updated contact details for officers at Housing Solutions.**

A member of the public, Judith, asked what proportion of families with primary school aged children lived in houses and how many lived in flats. She asked how this was impacting on families that lived in flats.

Lorna Collisson explained that she did not have the precise information to hand but families who did not have enough room would be moved up the waiting list.

Judith asked if Housing Solutions was putting families into flats rather than houses. She asked how long the waiting list currently was.

Lorna Collisson said that families would be offered what was available, they had a right to refuse a flat if they did not want it. Information on the waiting list could be provided by RBWM.

The Chairman reiterated that more affordable housing was needed in Maidenhead, the only option was to build on the green belt.

Councillor Singh said that a lot of the accommodation provided by Housing Solutions was separate to private accommodation, these were regarded as 'poor doors'. He asked for Lorna Collisson's view on this.

Lorna Collisson said that this was not something that was promoted by Housing Solutions, they wanted all residents to feel valued. It did sometimes depend on the developers and how they built the accommodation but the development team was looking to promote inclusion.

Councillor Davey commented on the Chairman's claims about needing to build on the green belt. He said that there was plenty of space available on brownfield sites.

## PARKING UPDATE

Neil Walter, Parking and Enforcement Manager, said that the parking strategy was adopted in November 2020. Since then, officer and Member groups had reviewed the strategy and separated it out into 26 individual work streams. The streams had been separated into short, medium and long term, with a number having now been completed. The review was being led by Andrew Durrant, Executive Director of Place, and he was updating Members on a regular basis on the progress of the strategy. In Maidenhead, temporary measures which had been brought in during the pandemic would be removed to allow more space in the town centre. Neil Walter showed a number of slides to the Forum, detailing the measures that would be reviewed on various streets of the town centre. The disabled bays had now been completed and were available in various locations. There were the same number of disabled bays now as there was previously. Officers were continuing to look at the town centre to see where additional parking could be provided. The landing parking site closed at the end of October/early November which had reduced the amount of parking available to residents. Some new temporary car parks had recently opened, while the Vicus Way car park would be ready by autumn 2022.

The Chairman asked how many places there were for street parking across Maidenhead.

Neil Walter said that there were around 20 spaces that were not currently able to be used, it was planned that these would be restored by Christmas.

Councillor Baldwin said that while the number of disabled bays was the same as previously, they were located further away from the town centre.

Neil Walter said that the areas that were now being redeveloped had been popular for both on and off street parking. Trying to put this parking back in after development had proved to be difficult, but officers wanted to retain as much parking as possible. The landings site had been a bonus as the developers were originally meant to take the land back at the end of 2020. Surface car parks remained the most popular amongst residents visiting the town centre.

Councillor Baldwin asked how much interaction the parking team had with the planning team, in particular whether there was liaison around the parking arrangements for planning applications.

Neil Walter said that the team did talk to the planning team about the regeneration of Maidenhead. The car was the main mode of transport in the town and it was important that this was maintained by ensuring that there was adequate parking. When developments were brought forward, the amount of parking provided did have an effect on the town centre.

Councillor Bowden joined the meeting.

Councillor G Jones said that he was the council representative on the Older People's Advisory Forum. They had informed him that popping into the town centre was very difficult as there were not many parking spaces available. Councillor G Jones said that it felt like spaces had been pushed back and located further away from the centre. He had done some research and found that 82 streets had parking restrictions, while only 17 had free on street parking signs. Councillor G Jones commented on Marlow and said that the parking there worked really well, there was also no shortage of available space. There needed to be more on street parking provided for residents.

Neil Walter responded by explaining that the 17 signs that had been referenced provided space for at least 60 cars for on street, short term parking. It was difficult to maintain bays in good locations due to the redevelopment which had been happening around Maidenhead.

Councillor G Jones asked how many spaces there used to be. He was informed that it was about the same number now as it had been previously.

Councillor G Jones said that it did not feel like the same number, he would investigate further after the active travel measures had been removed.

Neil Walter said he was happy to do a walk round with Councillor G Jones.

**ACTION – Neil Walter to organise a walk round with Councillor G Jones once the active travel measures had been removed.**

The Chairman commented that he parked in Grove Road and had no issue in finding a space.

Councillor Singh said that he was pleased with the bays which had been put in on Bridge Avenue, more on street parking was needed in Maidenhead. There were a lot of bays that were left empty overnight, Councillor Singh suggested that residents who lived in flats could use these bays overnight. Some parking meters from streets had been removed and Councillor Singh suggested that this was a missed opportunity to implement electric vehicle (EV) charging points. He asked how many EV charging points had been installed across the borough.

Neil Walter said that the parking meters in question had been removed from Windsor. EV charging points were part of an EV strategy which was currently being developed. Alma Road in Windsor was the only place in the borough that currently had EV charging points.

Councillor Singh suggested that a parking meter could be added to the Reform Road car park to allow residents to park there.

Neil Walter said that Clive House was used by the council and was therefore a staff car park. Reform Road car park was rented out to tenants who were based on that road. Multi-story cars parks in Maidenhead had plenty of availability, residents were encouraged to use them rather than sites that were due for redevelopment.

Councillor Singh asked if there was any development planned by the Lidl and Aldi. Neil Walter was not aware of any plans.

Councillor Davey asked how many parking bays were available in Windsor.

Neil Walter said there were around 20 bays, which were time limited.

Councillor Taylor asked if the Vicus Way car park could be used in the evenings for local residents, this could also happen in other areas to alleviate any problems with parking.

Neil Walter confirmed that a planning condition on the car park was that it was closed overnight, therefore this would not be possible.

Councillor Baldwin commented on the car park and said the opening times were strange, he felt it was a flawed plan.

Councillor Taylor asked if this was something that could be looked at for future developments.

Neil Walter said that he was happy to look at this, Stafferton Way was one example that could be investigated.

Councillor Taylor thanked Neil Walter and Councillor Johnson for helping to sort out noise issues at the Stafferton Way car park.

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN MANAGER UPDATE

Robyn Bunyan, Maidenhead Town Manager, introduced herself to the Forum and explained that she had been working at Norden Farm for the past 11 years. It was a really interesting time to be joining RBWM and Robyn Bunyan wanted to energise Maidenhead and return a sense of identity to the town. There was a lot happening and it was important that residents were engaged and aware of what was going on in their local area. There was a programme of events being put together that everyone could get involved with. The Christmas light switch on would be taking place on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Other events were planned to have an impact, for example planting projects, working with schools and a mural project. Looking ahead to 2022, there would be events celebrating the lunar new year and linking this in with the Winter Olympics, which would be hosted in China around the same time. Wellbeing events would be run in conjunction with rambling groups, Robyn Bunyan wanted residents to be in a good mind set. She wanted to work with community groups, organisations and schools to improve on the good framework of events that had already been organised.

Councillor Baldwin thanked Robyn Bunyan for her work with Maidenhead Food Share, she had brought a lot of joy to vulnerable residents. He liked the sound of the ideas which had been mentioned, murals in particular could be productive and creative rather than just vandalism.

Robyn Bunyan responded by saying that some spaces had already been identified in the town which would be appropriate for the mural project. There were a lot of creative people in Maidenhead and Robyn Bunyan also wanted to reach out to local professional artists.

Councillor Davey said the activities based around the lunar new year sounded good. He asked if Robyn Bunyan could work in conjunction with Paul Roach, Windsor, Eton and Ascot Town Manager, to develop similar plans.

Robyn Bunyan said that she was working closely with Paul Roach, it was all about RBWM being one borough.

Councillor Singh said that the mural project was a great idea, there had previously been a mural in Queen Street which had been positively received. There were local artists and schools that would be keen to get involved. Councillor Singh felt that it would bring some positivity to Maidenhead. Some plants had been removed a few years ago due to funding, it would be good to get these back.

Robyn Bunyan said she was keen to investigate projects like 'adopt a plant', working with schools to help children look after plants. Linking in with other things like the borough in bloom could see initiatives like businesses in bloom come to the fore.

Councillor Singh asked what were the top three targets or challenges facing the new Maidenhead Town Manager.

Robyn Bunyan said that she wanted the sense of identity to be restored for the people of Maidenhead and their town. Business engagement was important to ensure that local businesses could flourish. Robyn Bunyan wanted to see animation and a sense of vibrancy about the town centre going forward.

Councillor Baskerville commented on a number of anniversaries that were happening at the moment for some of Maidenhead's sports clubs. Maidenhead United were currently playing in their 150<sup>th</sup> season, so there were various celebrations and events happening at York Road across the season. Maidenhead Rugby Club were celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it would be good to work with these clubs. Kidwells park had some beech trees and it had recently been the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of when these trees were planted.

Robyn Bunyan said that she would look to add these into the calendar of events.

Councillor Bhangra thanked Robyn Bunyan for the presentation and said that it was good to have her working for RBWM and improving Maidenhead town centre.

Councillor Singh asked if there had been any communication with the organisers of the downhill go kart race.

Robyn Bunyan confirmed that she had not heard from the organisers of this event.

The Chairman said that he recently spoken to the organisers, he would speak to Robyn Bunyan about it.

Councillor Singh requested that he was part of the discussions on this event.

### PRESENTATION ON THE PLANNING PROCESS

Due to illness, officers from the planning team were unable to attend the meeting. It was proposed that this item would be added to the agenda for the next meeting, in January 2022.

### ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

Councillor Baldwin said that there were still issues facing the Hindu society, he would discuss this with the Chairman outside of the meeting.

Councillor Taylor said it would be good to add the item on the planning process, which was not able to be considered at this meeting, to the agenda for the next meeting. She suggested that now the active travel measures around Maidenhead were being removed, it could be worth inviting the Maidenhead cycling group to outline the cycling routes that were available across the town.

Councillor Singh said that he would like to see the developers from the St Clouds Way development invited to the Forum to discuss their plans for the site.

### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All future meetings to be held on the following dates (at 6.30pm):

- Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 - Zoom
- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022 - Zoom
- Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022 – Council Chamber, Town Hall, Maidenhead

As agreed at Full Council in September 2021, all meetings of the Maidenhead Town Forum would be virtual, with one meeting a year to be held in person.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....