

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

THURSDAY, 17 MARCH 2022

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Simon Bond, Councillor John Bowden, Councillor Samantha Rayner, Jeff Pick (Thames Valley Police) and Victoria Manston (Hub Residential)

Officers: Mark Beeley, Robyn Bunyan and Neil Walter

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G Jones, Councillor Targowski and Councillor McWilliams. Councillor Haseler was attending the meeting as a substitute.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.**

Jeff Pick, Thames Valley Police, had produced and circulated the latest crime stats for Maidenhead, the Chairman allowed an opportunity for Forum Members to ask any relevant questions before moving on to considering the items on the agenda.

Councillor Haseler asked how keyless vehicle thefts were recorded in the stats.

Jeff Pick explained that cars used to be stolen by copying the signal, now thieves were using relay boosters. Car trackers would work for about 10 minutes, but professional car thieves knew where these were located and could remove them quickly. Apple Air Tags were a useful tool as they could be operated anywhere in the world and therefore allowed the police to track stolen vehicles for longer. The best way to protect against this was to keep the key fob in a faraday cage.

Councillor Bhangra said that Range Rovers were the most common type of car to be stolen in the UK, steering locks were a good way to deter thieves. Councillor Bhangra noted that there had been a significant number of bike thefts and asked why this figure was so high.

Jeff Pick said that the police did not know what happened with stolen bikes, they encouraged cyclists to mark their bikes with the bike register. The Windsor Cycle Hub was one organisation which could offer this service. The combination lock was one of the easiest to crack as thieves could just pull it apart.

Councillor Singh joined the meeting.

Robyn Bunyan, Maidenhead Town Manager, suggested that it would be good to have a stall or event on the high street on bike safety and security.

Councillor Singh said that there was an issue with bikes being stolen at the train station, a lot of residents were now reluctant to leave their bike here.

Jeff Pick responded by saying that the bike racks were good but the issue was that thieves were stealing bikes in sight of the public. Many people often did not realise that a bike was being stolen, as thieves made it look smooth and unsuspecting.

Councillor Singh asked what advice the police had for any residents who witnessed a bike being stolen.

Jeff Pick advised that witnesses should try to take photos or video the incident, should it be safe to do so. The crime could then be reported to the police either by calling 101 or using the website. This would help the police to understand which areas had a significant problem and would enable them to focus resources on these areas.

Councillor Singh said that some residents had faced issues with getting through on the 101 service, he asked if there could be a presence at Maidenhead Police Station where residents could report crimes.

Jeff Pick said that this is something that he could raise internally. All crimes could be reported online, it was the same as reporting via 101.

Councillor Baskerville asked how many thieves had been caught stealing bikes and if there had been any successful prosecutions.

Jeff Pick confirmed that there had not been any, the thieves were professionals who knew what they were doing and this made it very difficult for the police to stop.

Councillor Baskerville said that the thieves seemed to be ahead of the technology, he asked if manufactures were putting in place measures to stop the theft of vehicles.

Jeff Pick said that the police had conversations with the manufacturers but there had been no change.

Councillor Baldwin joined the meeting.

Councillor Singh commented on individuals who knocked on residents doors, the trading standards team used to give out stickers which residents could put in their windows. He said that there had been funding cuts and so was unsure if the team still provided the stickers.

Jeff Pick confirmed that the stickers were provided out of the budget for the team, if the council could help with this it would be appreciated.

Councillor Singh suggested that Cabinet was asked to provide this additional funding to the trading standards team.

Councillor Rayner joined the meeting.

## UPDATE ON THE HUB/LANDING SITE

Victoria Manston, Senior Development Manager at Hub Residential, gave the Forum a presentation on the latest developments at the Landings site in Maidenhead. Initial works on phase 1 had started in October 2021, with the main contract work starting in December 2021. The main contractor was JJ Rhatigan, phase 1 consisted of the residential element which was 420 homes across 4 blocks, which included 4 ground floor commercial units. The garden square was in the centre of the scheme, all of the homes would be for rent and would be managed by Get Living. The scheme was due to be delivered in four phases, with the target delivery date being between February and October 2024. The contractor was doing a lot of

work in the local community, taking part in the recent pancake day race in the town centre and also sponsoring one of Maidenhead United's recent matches, against Boreham Wood in the National League. Work was also being done with local charities and there would be opportunities to work with local schools too.

Councillor Singh said that he had originally seen plans to link the site with the development which would soon be commencing at the Nicholsons Quarter, he asked if the contractors would be working in partnership with Areli.

Victoria Manston said that there would be connections through the site, from the train station into the town centre. There were not any plans currently to link with the Nicholsons site.

Councillor Singh asked if there were any plans to create artwork on the hoardings surrounding the site, to build on the mural which was currently already there and had been created by local artist James Maddison.

Victoria Manston said that local schools had been approached for interest in an arts project to decorate the hoardings. Information on the 'Make Maidenhead' campaign would also be displayed.

Councillor Singh asked about the commercial units and what this retail offering might be.

Victoria Manston said that the current vision was for two restaurants or light refreshment venues and two retail units. Get Living would be considering appropriate tenants and this would be confirmed in due course.

Councillor Baldwin asked about the Nicholsons development and said that Areli had promised to involve local stakeholders on sustainability, however there had been little communication on this so far.

The Chairman said that Areli would be able to answer this question, he would be happy to invite the developers to a future meeting.

**ACTION – Invite Areli to the next meeting of Maidenhead Town Forum.**

Councillor Singh asked when the first phase of the development would be completed. He asked if works were progressing as planned.

He was informed that it was planned for completion by February 2024 and would involve a large proportion of the garden square being completed. Works had been progressing on schedule, so far.

Councillor Singh mentioned the 278 works, he asked if there was anything the council could do to assist.

Victoria Manston said that the designs for the 278 works would be drawn up by the developer shortly. These works needed to be delivered as part of the first phase.

Councillor Taylor said that there was a huge amount of interest in the site. She asked if there was the possibility of having Perspex windows in the hoardings so that residents could see the progress of construction. Councillor Taylor had noted that some residents were using the top of the car park, this could be a safer way of seeing into the site.

Victoria Manston said that a see-through window was part of the hoarding mural on Queen Street, she would speak to the developers about the potential for more windows to be added to the hoardings around the site.

**ACTION – Victoria Manston to speak to developers about the potential to have more see through hoardings around the Landings site.**

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN MANAGER UPDATE

Robyn Bunyan, Maidenhead Town Manager, said that footfall across the town centre had been recovering. 2019 was the last 'normal' trading year and when compared to the data, Maidenhead was recovering faster than other similar sized places. There was more to do, but generally the town was in a good place. There had been a lot of regeneration of the town planned and as Victoria Manston had mentioned as part of the update on the Landings site, the developers had joined in with the recent pancake day race which was held on the high street. Lots of scaffolding was coming down around the Chapel Arches development too. The Countryside development near the Town Hall would shortly see the community square completed and there would be a launch event. Across the town, car parking usage was down and this was still largely attributed to the lack of office workers.

Considering highlights of the previous month, Robyn Bunyan said that Anytime Fitness had been running free bootcamps. Spring hanging baskets had been placed around the town centre and the recent Chinese New Year celebrations and events had been a success, particularly linking in well with the countries hosting of the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. Activities over the period had been attended by over 1,500 and had therefore been well received. The street clean team had been out cleaning streets and the council had recently purchased two professional graffiti cleaning kits, along with 20 community graffiti removal kits. This would allow community groups to help clean their communities. Grilled Grub, one of the market street traders, had recently taken over the old Subway unit and there was hope that this would be open in the next couple of months. The craft fair would be taking place in the Nicholsons Shopping Centre, while a vegan market would be taking place at the weekend in the high street.

Robyn Bunyan said that Maidenhead was preparing events to celebrate the Jubilee. There would be bunting and flags, which would be in place before the Queen's birthday on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2022. There would be a package put together that would allow businesses to sponsor special Jubilee hanging baskets.

The Chairman announced that social distancing barriers around the town centre would be removed, on Queen Street, Broadway and York Road. The cycle parking in King Street and the high street, and the cycle lanes in the high street would be retained.

Councillor Bhangra said it was great to see pop up stalls and bars in the town centre. He commented on the vacancy rates and asked how the council could encourage businesses to open up in the town.

Robyn Bunyan said that there was lot of activity on the high street and a significant proportion of the areas which were currently covered in hoardings were due to work which was ongoing.

Councillor Baldwin expressed concern about the parking, the budget had been based on the pre-Covid level of parking. The numbers were still down and Councillor Baldwin believed that this called into question the assumptions which had been made on this important revenue line in the budget, particularly as the new financial year was imminent.

Robyn Bunyan said that office trade was a big part of the issue, she was not sure that parking would recover to the same level that was seen pre-Covid. People had changed their mindset and were walking and cycling more around the town.

Councillor Baskerville asked how readily available the graffiti kits would be and also if any training would be provided on how the kits worked.

Robyn Bunyan said that there were two types, professional and community kits. The community kits were created specially for groups and organisations and came with instructions which would allow them to be easily used. The kits would be available for collection from the Town Hall or could be delivered to groups if required.

Councillor Baskerville said that it was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Town Hall opening later in the year, he asked if anything would be done to commemorate this. The date would be 25<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

Robyn Bunyan said that she was not aware of anything happening but would explore options to see if anything could be done to mark this date.

**ACTION – Robyn Bunyan to explore potential options to mark the anniversary of the opening of the Town Hall.**

Councillor Singh expressed concern about the announcement on barriers and other active travel measures being removed around the town centre. He asked if this was the correct time to be doing so, when cases were rising in the area.

Councillor Hasler, as Cabinet Member for Planning, Parking, Highways and Transport, explained that there was a lot of plastic clutter around the town centre which had been the result of the active travel measures and it was a mess. The barriers were not serving any purpose and they were causing an obstruction to the highway. Certain cycling provisions would be maintained, but the plastic barriers would be removed.

Councillor Singh said that the council received funding from the government to implement these measures, he felt now was not the right time to remove them. He argued that the only reason the barriers were not in the correct positions was because of the recent storm.

Councillor Hasler responded by saying that the barriers had not been in position for months now, it was not just damage from the storm. There were no implications from this decision being taken and no money needed to be repaid back to the government.

Councillor Taylor suggested that there could be a firework display at the Town Hall to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, as had been mentioned by Councillor Baskerville earlier. The Christmas fireworks did not happen last year and Councillor Taylor suggested that the budget saved from this event not taking place could be used.

Robyn Bunyan said that due to the fireworks being cancelled in advance, there were no additional fireworks that had been stored. She was happy to raise the question to see if it was something that could be done.

Councillor Taylor said that many businesses were moving out of the Nicholsons Shopping Centre ahead of the redevelopment and relocating onto the high street. Councillor Taylor asked if businesses were being located in similar positions to where they had been originally.

Robyn Bunyan confirmed that this was the case where it was possible and where space was available.

Councillor Bond asked how things like the amount of walking and cycling across the town was monitored by officers. He had recently taken a bus and wondered how bus usage was also monitored by the council.

Robyn Bunyan said that walking was based on footfall in the town centre, cycling was based around the amount of bikes that were being used in the town. Bus usage was not currently monitored, but there was a team at the council that did, this was something that could be added to the report.

Councillor Singh said that parking usage was down but there was a scheme which would look to give discounts on parking to residents to encourage them to use car parks in Maidenhead. He suggested that the Broadway and Hines Meadow car parks should be included, as this would help businesses in the town centre and encourage further footfall.

Neil Walter, Parking and Enforcement Manager, commented on Councillor Baldwin's question on the budget for parking income. He said that the budget income was based on pre-Covid usage and did not rely heavily on season ticket income. Officers were not predicting a change over the course of the financial year, as office workers were not expected to return to offices in the same way. An amount had been added to the budget to cover the shortfall on season ticket income. The two car parks that were part of the resident scheme were the two busiest car parks in Maidenhead, per space capita. It was unnecessary to use the Broadway car park, as the council was unsure of how long it would be there for with the imminent redevelopment of the shopping centre. Hines Meadow was a short term car park for those using Sainsbury's, there was already a discount offered to shoppers by the supermarket.

Councillor Singh said that car parking revenue was down because the evening parking charges had been amended.

Neil Walter said that this was incorrect, the council used to charge a flat rate between 6pm and midnight. This had changed to only be chargeable until 9pm, therefore parking was free between 9pm until 9am the following morning.

### DISCOUNT PARKING SCHEME FOR RESIDENTS

Neil Walter said that residents who signed up to the scheme would have access to one hour of free parking at a select number of RBWM car parks. The system would work by using the RingGo app, with both Maidenhead and Windsor having two eligible car parks included in the scheme. Applications for the scheme opened on 14<sup>th</sup> February, with over 1,000 applications being received in the first day. The council had so far received around 4,500 applications, with around 2,000 new RingGo accounts created and 2,000 new vehicles registered. The prediction from officers was approximately 8,000 – 10,000 applications from residents. Five drop-in sessions had been offered by the council to help those residents who needed assistance signing up for the scheme, these had been well attended with the next one due to take place in Ascot. Officers were continuing to test the live system to ensure that the tariff was correct. Each car park would have different sections, one for general use and one to enable residents to benefit from the discount.

Councillor Taylor said that she had noticed on the RingGo app that when she tried to pay and it was free, for example on a Sunday, residents were unable to pay. She asked if this would also be the case in the permit section of the app.

Neil Walter said that the charging would be the same for those with the discount permit as well as those without the discount.

Councillor Taylor asked if the app would automatically display the correct zone for the resident to park in or would these need to be manually selected through the app.

Neil Walter confirmed that the zones that were applicable for the permit would be displayed. The discounted parking would only be available for those that had the valid permit.

Councillor Taylor asked if there were plans for a video walk through to be created, showing residents how to park and what they needed to do on the RingGo app to get the discount, this could be published on the council's social media channels.

Neil Walter responded by saying that there were videos on the website which showed how residents could sign up. Once the system was live, some additional videos could be added to the website and shared on RBWM social media channels.

Councillor Bhangra asked how many of the applications for a discount had been approved and if any other businesses, other than the council, were advertising the scheme. Councillor Bhangra agreed with Neil Walter's comments on the scheme not being needed in car parks like the Broadway, which was due to be knocked down.

Neil Walter said that around 4,500 discount permits had been issued, he was not aware of any other businesses that were advertising the discount scheme.

Councillor Singh said that the scheme would not be live whilst the car park would be demolished. Out of the 4,500 permits, how many residents had used the scheme so far and been able to find car parking spaces.

Neil Walter said that there were 2,000 new RingGo accounts, so the applications had been made by around 2,000 residents. The system was not yet live so there was no data on usage.

Councillor Singh asked for the views of the Cabinet Member on the scheme and asked if the Broadway and Hines Meadow car parks could be considered for inclusion in the scheme.

Councillor Haseler said that officers had done research on which car parks were appropriate, the ones chosen had the biggest turn over for short stay usage. As the scheme went live and progressed, it would be monitored.

Neil Walter gave the example of West Street car park, which had around 80 spaces. In February 2022, there were 4,000 one hour stay tickets issued in this car park. In the Nicholsons car park, which had around 700 spaces, there were around 7,000 one hour stay tickets issued. This showed that the turnover for short stay parking at West Street significantly outweighed the Nicholsons car park.

Councillor Haseler added that the council needed to be realistic about the financial implications of the scheme, especially as a balanced budget had been delivered. It was a great pilot scheme and was a good place to start.

Councillor Singh said that the issue with the scheme was that it promoted short stay parking, the council should be looking to increase the dwell time of shoppers. A number of car parks were sitting empty and the scheme should be focused on quiet car parks rather than ones that were already popular and in demand.

Councillor Baldwin sought to correct Councillor Haseler by saying that the administration had proposed a balanced budget, it was not able to deliver it until the end of the next financial year. He congratulated Neil Walter, it had been a tough couple of years and he had done a good job. Councillor Baldwin said that he was a credit to RBWM and thanked Neil Walter for all his efforts.

## ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

Councillor Taylor suggested that it would be beneficial to invite ShopMobility to the next meeting, to run through the services that they offered.

Councillor Baldwin added that ShopMobility had recently done a presentation to the Disability and Inclusion Forum.

## DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022, starting at 6.30pm.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.10 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....