

## COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2021

PRESENT: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Greg Jones (Vice-Chairman), Gurpreet Bhangra, Helen Price and Del Campo

Also in attendance: Councillors Clive Baskerville, Jon Davey, Samantha Rayner, David Hilton and Ewan Larcombe, and Richard Poad

Officers: Alysse Strachan, David Scott, Ian Brazier-Dubber, Andy Aldridge, Andy Carswell and Steph James

### WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Panel Members and officers to introduce themselves.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence. Councillor Price asked if the two co-opted members were present. The clerk, Andy Carswell, stated they had both been sent the meeting invite allowing them to attend but had not joined the meeting.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Price declared an interest in Item 8 as she was a member of Maidenhead Golf Club

Councillor Bhangra declared an interest in Item 8 as Norden Farm was within his ward.

Councillor Bowden declared an interest in Item 8 as he was a trustee of the Old Court.

### MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the two previous meetings were not currently available. The clerk advised they would be published with the agenda for the next meeting.

### MAIDENHEAD HERITAGE CENTRE - PROGRESS REPORT FROM 2020-21

Steph James, Service Lead for Economic Growth, introduced Richard Poad, chairman of the Maidenhead Heritage Centre to the Panel. She explained that the Heritage Centre had recently been awarded a £6,000 grant to support core costs and allow it to continue growing its online presence while Covid continued to affect footfall.

Richard Poad explained the Heritage Centre was set up in 1993 and was a registered charity. Its premises in Park Street was the seventh building it had been homed in since 1993 and during its time there it had spent around £1.5million on running costs for the building. It employed a part-time curator and manager, and had a team of 25 volunteers. For the current financial year the Heritage Centre had been given the discretionary 20 per cent business relief, which they were extremely grateful for.

The Panel was told that Covid had badly affected the Heritage Centre and it had needed a government grant and the £6,000 relief grant from RBWM to cover its costs during the various

lockdowns that had been implemented. This meant the museum had not required the use of furlough.

During lockdowns the Heritage Centre had started to run online lectures using Zoom. These had proved very popular and more than 40 lectures had been given to local groups. Richard Poad said they had reached a worldwide audience, with the lectures being viewed from New Zealand and California. The lectures had been recorded and were available for free to all day centres and care homes within the Royal Borough, and also those outside the Borough that were within a five-mile radius of the Heritage Centre. It was intended to resume lectures early in the new year.

Museums had been permitted to re-open from May 17<sup>th</sup> and the Heritage Centre had welcomed a number of schools in for visits. However the small size of the current premises prevented larger groups from visiting. Richard Poad said the Heritage Centre was in the early stages of agreeing a move to the former SportsAble building at Braywick Park, which would enable larger artefacts to be displayed and bigger visitor groups to be accommodated. At the moment the Centre had to close to other visitors if a school group were attending, and moving to the proposed new premises would eliminate the need for this.

Responding to questions from Councillor Jones, Richard Poad said in a normal year the Heritage Centre would expect to welcome around 6,000 visitors. Before the outbreak of the Covid pandemic the Centre had started to engage with the tourism officers at the Royal Borough to boost visitor numbers. Richard Poad said the majority of visitors were ones who had made a special effort to travel to Maidenhead in order to attend, and there was a relatively small number of drop-in visitors. Additionally larger groups of visitors, such as aviation enthusiasts who wanted to use the Spitfire simulator, could not be accommodated at the current premises. As there was parking at Braywick Park, and it was easily reached from all major access routes into Maidenhead, it was felt the move would not be detrimental to the Heritage Centre.

Responding to a question from Councillor del Campo, Richard Poad asked if members could check with care homes in their ward if they had received an email from the Heritage Centre asking if they would be interested in being sent the recordings of the lectures. Members asked if this request could be sent out in the weekly Members' newsletter.

Members wished Richard Poad and the Heritage Centre volunteers good luck for the proposed move to Braywick Park. It was agreed there was no need to further scrutinise the topic.

## RESIDENT SCRUTINY TOPIC - PARKING ON FOOTPATHS AND VERGES

Alysse Strachan, Head of Neighbourhood Services, told the Panel the topic had been suggested by a resident due to issues with parking across pedestrian footways. She explained that unless there were existing restrictions in place, such as a double yellow line, it was not possible to enforce parking on footpaths or verges. There was a bill progressing through Parliament which, if introduced, would allow enforcement of parking on footpaths or verges even if there were no restrictions. The Panel was reminded it was being asked if any further scrutiny of this topic was required.

Councillor del Campo said it was her understanding there was a blanket ban on parking on verges and pavements in Brighton and asked how this had been implemented. Alysse Strachan said she would investigate this. She said if the parking team were informed of particular hotspots where there were parking issues then these could be looked at and enforcement could take place if allowed.

Councillor Larcombe said he had looked at the proposed bill and noted that it had stated it would not be progressed with as the House of Lords had been prorogued. Additionally he

stated that this was a private members' bill and there was not support for it in the House of Commons.

Members told the Panel of particular problem areas for parking in their wards and said it had been raised with them. Councillor Price said it was important for a strategic long-term view to be considered on how to tackle the issue. Councillor Davey said it was important for members to report it through the appropriate channels, and said in his experience that when he had reported something then it would be investigated promptly. Members were told that in some circumstances police enforcement of parking could take place as it could constitute an offence of unnecessary obstruction, but sometimes this would only be enforced if a vehicle blocked the full width of a footpath or pavement. Councillor Bowden noted that a neighbouring borough had introduced parking bays on pavements but queried the legality of these. He added that although the introduction of parking permits had been criticised, it did at least still allow residents to park outside their homes.

It was agreed that the issue would be looked at again at another meeting in three months' time.

### COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

David Scott, Head of Communities, told the Panel that the Community Safety Partnership involved a number of multi-agency arrangements and a lot of work had been taking place over the past year to strengthen the links between all of the different agencies. There had been a focus of combatting violence and exploitation as the two main priority areas, and following discussions at Board level within the Community Safety Partnership four more areas of focus had been identified. The first of these related to the work of the Channel Panel, which worked to prevent people from being radicalised and going on to pose a potential terrorist threat. David Scott explained that the Channel Panel had been in place for a long time but it had been agreed to formally recognise the work of the Panel and the Prevent Delivery Board, as the strategic oversight, as a priority area within the wider work of the Community Safety Partnership.

The second new focus area looked at multi agency safety issues, a recent good example being the joint work on improving water safety. Members were reminded there had been two deaths in the River Thames during the hot weather over the summer, one at Cookham and one at Boulter's Lock, although the circumstances of these deaths were very different. A new multi-agency approach had been taken to identify and mitigate risks relating to the river.

The next focus area related to combatting Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The Panel was reminded the issue had come to the forefront following a number of high-profile incidents nationally in recent months. The Community Safety Partnership aimed to make sure the fear of violence was reduced, as well as reducing actual levels of violence, through proper education and ensuring the appropriate measures were in place. David Scott told the Panel that Thames Valley Police was one of 18 police forces to implement a Violence Reduction Unit, and this had been in place for the last two years. Thames Valley Police and the Council had been given support from the Home Office to develop initiatives to combat violent crime. Further legislation granting local authorities greater responsibilities to create multi-agency arrangements to reduce violence was currently going through the second reading stage in Parliament and was likely to be introduced in early 2022. The Panel was told that a grant of £40,000 had been received and this was to be put towards supporting a new co-ordinator, who had been assigned to the team of Andy Aldridge, Community Safety Manager. David Scott said their main area of focus would be to identify people at risk of violence and intervene as early as possible. Although violence reduction had been a priority for some time, the Community Safety Partnership Board had agreed to recognise VAWG as a separate new priority area for the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

The final area of focus related to local neighbourhood and community led priorities, which provided for a number of areas of crime that affected the Royal Borough to be prioritised at a

local level. David Scott gave the examples of these local neighbourhood and community led issues as opportunistic rural crime, bike thefts, antisocial behaviour hotspots and unauthorised encampments, and the intensive local engagement work in four key areas led by TVP, as all focusing on issues that affected the Royal Borough on a local basis.

The Panel was told there would now be a refresh of the community safety plan, and it had been agreed this should be a three-year strategy rather than for just one year. This had been agreed in line with the Police and Crime Commissioner's plan, who had recently published his new Policing and Justice Plan for the Thames Valley Force area. Members were reminded this had been highlighted at the last Panel meeting. Members were told that this would enable the partners involved in the multi-agency partnership to generate new initiatives and workstreams, and identify possible gaps in their work. David Scott explained this plan would be unique to the Royal Borough, rather than being based on a plan covering the whole of the Thames Valley.

David Scott told the Panel that the Domestic Homicide Review had been completed and submitted to the Home Office for consideration earlier this year. Members were informed that a death that occurred in December 2017 had been reviewed and identified as meeting the criteria for a Domestic Homicide Review. This review was submitted to the Home Office and the review report of the case was considered in July this year. This had acknowledged the community safety action plan and use of multi-agency partnership to review the learning from this homicide. The new priorities for the partnership had been noted and would be formally incorporated into the revised terms of reference following agreement at a recent Board meeting. It was noted that the action plans could be discussed at a future Panel meeting.

Andy Aldridge told the Panel the refresh put the Community Safety Partnership into a stronger position and stated his belief that the three year action plan would prove to be much more beneficial.

Following a question from Councillor Bowden, it was confirmed that British Transport Police were included as part of the multi-agency partnership planning group for the Borough's work on ceremonial events for Windsor, in addition to officers from Thames Valley Police and the Metropolitan Police. Members were reminded that the Met officers were responsible for security at Windsor Castle, but the involvement of British Transport Police would be reviewed for the wider Community Safety Partnership work, given the large number of railway stations and lines in the Borough.

Councillor del Campo said she had not seen much communication regarding river safety work that had been undertaken since the tragic death earlier this year at Cookham and asked if this could be addressed. She also raised the issue of lack of streetlighting in some areas and said this could be a contributory factor to some sexual assaults that had been reported recently. Councillor del Campo also asked what was being done regarding the recent trend of women being injected with drugs while on a night out. David Scott said there were ongoing police operations tackling sexual predation and misuse of drugs, following early successes in the operation when it was introduced in Oxford, and one of the areas where this was being implemented locally was Windsor. The Panel was advised that an arrest had been made after an individual was identified by the CCTV Control Room. Regarding streetlighting, David Scott recognised there were a number of key areas where lighting could be increased, and asked for problem areas that ward members were alerted to be reported either to the Community Wardens or the Head of Service.

Responding to a question from Councillor Price, David Scott advised that residents could raise community safety concerns confidentially via the community wardens, through their generic email address of [Wardens@RBWM.gov.uk](mailto:Wardens@RBWM.gov.uk), and these would be acted upon.

Councillor Jones asked if consideration had been given to including the Environment Agency as part of the Community Safety Partnership to help with issues relating to river safety. David Scott said that they had been closely involved in the recent water safety work, and that their

ongoing involvement with the Community Safety Partnership could be investigated. Regarding other crime and antisocial behaviour issues, David Scott advised that he had weekly meetings with the local police commander and key issues were discussed there and updates on initiatives given.

It was agreed that the Community Safety Partnership progress on their new action plan could be reviewed by the Panel as an agenda item in the 2022/23 municipal year.

Members thanked officers for the comprehensive nature of the update provided and the work that had taken place to strengthen the Community Safety Partnership.

### WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Bowden reminded Members that a number of extra meetings had been scheduled, and the value of the work being considered by so many topic areas needed to be considered to try and reduce the volume of work and number of meetings. Members were reminded that a meeting would be taking place the following week, which would look solely to the Tivoli contract. Councillor Bowden said he had recently attended a briefing for all Overview and Scrutiny chairmen regarding the budget, which would be discussed in January. Councillor Bowden said he would be unavailable for the meeting scheduled for December 6<sup>th</sup>.

Councillor Price said the Tivoli contract would be of interest to members of the public but she had not seen the meeting advertised or promoted to residents. Councillor Bowden said he had received two emails from members of the public asking if they could ask questions at the meeting. It was asked if the meeting could be promoted by the Communications team.

Regarding the Maidenhead Golf Club update for the December 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, Councillor Price said it was important that Members be given a briefing paper as an update as this was an important issue relating to the Council's future finances. Councillor Bowden reminded Councillor Price that it might be necessary for some of the discussions to take place in Part II if it was contractually sensitive. David Scott said he would discuss this with the Executive Director of Place as it was his understanding the arrangements were between the Council and Golf Club only so were not subject to scrutiny. Councillor Price asked if written reports could be provided for the updates on Norden Farm and the Old Court, as Members would then have a better idea of whether these topics needed a debate or scrutiny. David Scott said he would check with the relevant officers to see if a written update could be provided. Councillor Jones queried if there was a need for a meeting to take place on December 6<sup>th</sup> if there were paper updates, but Councillor del Campo stated her belief that it was important that they meet. It was agreed to discuss this further at the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Councillor Price asked if Members could be provided with an update on foodbanks in the Royal Borough. Councillor Bowden said this could be an agenda item for the January meeting, but noted there were already two substantial items on the agenda for that meeting.

Councillor Price said that for the last two years Members had felt it would be prudent to hold a meeting that focused solely on the budget, and this had been noted in the Panel's annual report. She added the annual report had made recommendations that would help the Panel be more efficient and suggested this be revisited.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 9.00 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....