

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

MONDAY, 11 JULY 2022

PRESENT: Councillors David Coppinger (Chairman), Helen Taylor (Vice-Chairman), Gurpreet Bhangra, Ross McWilliams, Clive Baskerville, Chris Targowski, Geoff Hill, Greg Jones, Gerry Clark and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance: Councillor Simon Bond, Councillor Donna Stimson and Councillor Phil Haseler

Officers: Oran Norris-Browne, Andrew Durrant, Emmanuel Ogedengbe and Robyn Bunyan

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

### MINUTES

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2022 be a true and accurate record.**

### UPDATE ON REGENERATION AROUND MAIDENHEAD

Emmanuel Ogedengbe, Head of Development with RBWM Property Company, who was standing in for Ian Brazier-Dubber, provided the forum with an update on the regeneration works that were occurring within Maidenhead.

The public square at York Road was opened by the former Prime Minister Theresa May back in May 2022. Phase 1 had been shortlisted recently at the British Homes Awards 2022. This was a great testimony to the design and to what the Council was trying to achieve. The site was previously a car park, which had now been transformed into a mixed-use scheme of residential and commercial. This would continue to inspire confidence and vibrancy in the local community.

Emmanuel Ogedengbe added that conversations were currently ongoing with Shanly in relation to York Road Phase 2 in resolving the access constraint and there was hope that the obstacles could be overcome, and issues could be ironed out. Regarding York Road Phase 3, RBWM Property Company Limited was continuing to liaise with Maidenhead Heritage Centre who had now appointed a Property Adviser in relation to property matters and their potential relocation to the Sports Able Pavilion in Braywick Park. Talks were ongoing on this and were looking positive.

In terms of St Clouds Way, planning permission was formally issued recently with the Section 106 agreement having been signed. The first phase of the process would be the demolition of the former Magnet Leisure Centre. The Council were working very closely with Countryside Partnerships to get to a point where this could start in a timely manner. Hoarding will soon be erected around the site. Pre-commencement planning conditions were being dealt with by the Local Planning Authority and the Construction Environmental Management Plan was currently

being progressed in liaison with the LPA and Highways Department with a meaningful start on site anticipated by late August/September 2022.

Emmanuel Ogedengbe said that with Maidenhead Golf Course, SDP consultation was currently ongoing. There was also a current ongoing legal challenge against the Borough Local Plan, which was still awaiting decision from the High Court.

Councillor Greg Jones asked what was happening with the water feature within York Road. Emmanuel Ogedengbe replied by saying that he was not currently aware but was happy to take this offline and let Councillor Greg Jones know. He knew that Countryside Partnerships were looking to resolve the issue but would follow up on the progress offline.

**ACTION: Emmanuel Ogedengbe to follow up with Countryside Partnerships and inform Councillor Greg Jones on the issues with the water fountain located at York Road.**

Councillor Stimson asked if the closure of the public car parking at the former Magnet Leisure Centre site could be done as late as possible in the run up to demolition, in order to aid residents in parking close by the town centre. Emmanuel Ogedengbe said that it was imperative that information about the closure of the public car park from 1 July 2022 had to be released into the public domain to convey the anticipation of site preparations whilst there was a transitional period for the provision of temporary car parking for the Wilderness Medical Centre (i.e., the Surgeries, Pharmacy and Dental Practices) at the former Ten Pin Bowling site.

Councillor Bond asked about connectivity between different parts of the town centre. He directed attention towards a very narrow alley way between Wilkos and the bank, which connected the north of the town centre to the centre of the high street. He asked if there were any plans to better connect the north to the centre of the town centre.

*(Councillor Hill joined the meeting)*

Andrew Durrant, Executive Director of Place Services, said that works were ongoing in the town centre with the walking and cycling missing links, which was an initiative to improve connectivity in and around the town centre. Robyn Bunyan, Maidenhead Town Manager, said that it had always been a very busy pathway to access the centre of the high street from the north and admitted that it was very narrow. She noted that more work could perhaps be done to inform residents of other ways to connect with the centre of town. Emmanuel Ogedengbe added that it could be a planning issue, and one that the planning team would have to be consulted on.

The Chairman said that he would discuss this with Robyn Bunyan at their next offline meeting to see what alternatives they could possibly pursue for this issue.

Councillor Singh asked about the exemplar scheme on York Road and asked how many units had so far been sold, as he believed it to be slow progress so far.

Emmanuel Ogedengbe said that sales were progressing, admittedly a little slow of late but at this stage it was not impacting on the delivery of future phases of the Joint Venture projects with Countryside Partnerships. It was hoped that the housing market will have improved by the time St Clouds Way units were completed.

Emmanuel Ogedengbe then said that York Road was entered into the British Homes Awards' 'Mixed Used Development' category and was viewed as exemplar because of the benefit and creative solution to the transformation of the former car park use that it brought to the community. People could take more pride in it now compared to when it was merely just a car park. The panel of judges who shortlisted it, did so for this reason.

Emmanuel Ogedengbe said in response to Councillor Singh's question on whether discussions had taken place with Shanly Homes over issues at York Road Phase 1, that there had been discussions and whilst there was an impact on progress, this was not monumental. Phase 3 could potentially be delivered before Phase 2 and he said that the planning department would not necessarily be needed, provided there were no design changes.

Councillor Singh then asked if any offer had been made to Shanly Homes over a joined-up scheme or a land swap. Emmanuel Ogedengbe said that he could not go into specific details, although there had been active engagement within the company.

Councillor Singh then asked about the parking at St Clouds Way and raised concern about the lack of an agreement with the medical centre that served 30,000 residents.

Emmanuel Ogedengbe said that they had been in discussions with the surgery all along and that 40 temporary car parking spaces had been offered and agreed until the end of 2023 on the former Ten Pin Bowling site and that any permanent car parking requirements could be reviewed in the future. The Wilderness Medical Centre were to repurpose the 20 leased car parking area close to the Surgeries for patients dedicated car parking area.

Councillor McWilliams asked what the potential outcomes could be for the Judicial Review process in relation to Maidenhead Golf Course and the Borough Local Plan.

Emmanuel Ogedengbe said that he of course could not speculate, however admitted that there was currently a delay from the High Court in deciding on whether the administrative/technical error with the claim lodged could be sustained and allowed to progress. If the High Court ruled against the Borough Local Plan, then this would be up to the claimant and their legal advisors on what they would do next, and therefore he could not speculate any further.

The Chairman thanked Emmanuel Ogedengbe for his update.

Andrew Durrant then provided the forum with a presentation on Kidwells Park and RBWM tennis facilities, in addition to the regeneration of Maidenhead item.

Andrew Durrant said that the borough was at the early stages of their revised Sports & Leisure Strategy, which had a primary objective of "more residents, more active, more often and more healthy". This would be underpinned by three priorities that would be focussed upon.

These were:

1. Promote and champion existing clubs to help grow membership.
2. Maximise usage and accessibility of existing facilities to enable clubs to grow.
3. Identify gaps in leisure/sports facility provision and explore opportunities to address.

Andrew Durrant said that work was currently ongoing on built facilities and playing pitches with an aim to integrate usage, use demand and gap analysis and steer strategic investment in future facilities. Leisure re-procurement had been spoken about at recent cabinet meetings and a new leisure operator would be confirmed and announced during the early part of 2023 as the successful bidder. The attendance at leisure facilities was being seen to return to pre-pandemic levels and in some cases, the current participation levels in leisure were actually exceeding pre-pandemic levels. The Braywick leisure centre was now ahead of the former Magnet leisure centre site in terms of attendance.

Andrew Durrant said that with the regeneration of Maidenhead, this would ultimately attract more people to the town and in doing so, it would bring with it an increase in demand for parks such as Kidwells Park.

Andrew Durrant said that the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) had a funding package that was available across the country, delivered by Sport England. They were contacted a while back enquiring on whether there were opportunities within the borough for this funding, which there

were. A good share of this funding was obtained. Andrew Durrant then outlined some of the LTA's aims and features. It suggested improvements for the borough's tennis courts.

Andrew Durrant said that the 3 tennis park locations in Maidenhead were Kidwells, Desborough and Oaken Grove and he outlined the estimated demand figures for each court. The funding application went into the LTA in the last few weeks prior to this meeting, to which the borough heard back almost instantly that they were successful.

Andrew Durrant stressed that this was still subject to final signed agreements between the LTA and RBWM. The funding would be used to enhance the courts and improve their quality. It would also allow for people to book the courts and participate in an easy way.

Andrew Durrant then gave a quick overview of the key aspects of Kidwells Park. This included who managed it and what facilities it included. Facilities included a skate park, a children's play area, playing courts, memorial gardens, a water feature and a small building that in the past had been used as a café unit.

In terms of the café unit, a condition survey had been undertaken in 2021. It had previously received some interest from potential operators. The borough were currently considering an Expression of Interest to the market. A possible alignment with the new leisure contract was also being explored.

Andrew Durrant then provided the forum with a summary and outlined that there was a planned attacking approach to upgrade the tennis courts and to try and reopen the Kidwells Park café unit. He added that further communications would be provided to both Ward Councillors and residents once plans were definitive and before planned works were to take place.

Councillor Singh expressed his mixed feelings on this. He acknowledged the securing of the funding from the LTA which he was pleased for, however he said that there was currently a cost-of-living crisis and to begin charging residents to play tennis was concerning. He asked why the borough was now going to begin charging residents to play tennis, whereas currently they could play for free.

Councillor McWilliams who was Cabinet Member for Digital Connectivity, Housing Opportunity, & Sport & Leisure, said that the funding that had been secured was very positive news to improve the facilities and reopen the café unit. He acknowledged the hard work and success that Leisure Focus had brought to the borough and that their improved facilities were enhancing the community. He said that it would be good for a brief explanation on how the new system would work compared to the old system, which would be useful for residents to know.

Andrew Durrant followed up on this by saying that people would book online, receive the code and then this would give them access to the court. He said that accessibility was a key push, and this new system was very inclusive to whole range of different cohorts, throughout the year and the summer period. He added that over the next few years, he was keen to see better consistency over how courts are rented throughout the borough, so that it was consistent.

Councillor Singh then said that he was going to leave the meeting as he felt that his question was not being answered. The Chairman replied and stated clearly that he needed to wait until Andrew Durrant had finished before he could reply.

*(Councillor Singh left the meeting)*

Andrew Durrant said that if all facilities were free to use, then a hole would be left to fill if and when facilities needed to be repaired and maintained in the long term.

Councillor Hill said that in Councillor Singh's defence he did have a point that currently there were many people who were struggling financially, due to the cost-of-living crisis. He said that the borough had a duty of care to provide people with a way to stay fit and healthy if they could not afford to pay and play. He agreed that payments had to be obtained in order to maintain the facilities, however he implored for some provision for people who were unable to afford to do this.

Robyn Bunyan said that there were a range of people throughout Maidenhead, which was great. She said that a communication piece potentially existed to spread the awareness of it and reach the people who would really benefit from it.

Councillor Taylor said that she possessed some experience on this during her time working for Slough Borough Council. She said that bookings for the tennis courts there were done using block out features. The times would be blocked out for tennis lessons or 'have a go' sessions for example and other times it would be open for paying members. She said that it was important to strike a balance between both. She asked if it was possible to explore having a separate advantage card that could be used in order to not exclude.

Andrew Durrant thanked both Councillor Hill and Councillor Taylor for their comments and said that it was important to not exclude anybody and that this was certainly something that they could try and look at in conjunction with the leisure contract going forward.

**ACTION: Andrew Durrant to discuss with Leisure Focus on ways to not exclude people from leisure during cost-of-living crisis.**

Councillor McWilliams also thanked both Councillor Hill and Councillor Taylor for their comments and added that Leisure Focus did appear to have flexibility within their range of offerings, so welcomed discussions with them regarding the subject matter.

The Chairman thanked Andrew Durrant for his presentation and his time in addressing the forum.

The Chairman then said to Oran Norris-Browne, Democratic Services Officer, that he was happy for Councillor Singh to re-join the meeting. Oran Norris-Browne advised that Councillor Singh had informed him that he would be leaving halfway through the meeting and was therefore unavailable.

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN MANAGER UPDATE

The forum considered a written report by Robyn Bunyan, Maidenhead Town Manager.

Robyn Bunyan said that the good news was continuing in Maidenhead. 'A Hoppy Place' had recently opened next to the town hall, which gave a breath of fresh air into that area of the town. Wenzels had also now opened, along with Grilled Grub and Storia which had opened on the old Broadwick site. Robyn Bunyan said that a nice atmosphere had developed within the high street and that company employees had been seen more regularly attending sites within the town centre to purchase goods.

Robyn Bunyan said that the busiest day in May 2022 was Saturday 14 May with 26,335 visitors coming to the town centre. Visitor numbers on weekends were seen to be increasing and numbers were now back at pre-pandemic levels. Weekdays were also increasing. She acknowledged that there was more work to do, however the town centre was now a nice place to visit. Numerous other businesses were also coming to the town centre in the coming months. Premises licenses had also been applied for recently, suggesting further businesses coming to the town.

Robyn Bunyan said that in May 2022, social media engagement was very high. Events such as the craft market and the Jubilee shop window competition saw large amounts of engagement. The weekly produce market was being seen to also grow.

Robyn Bunyan said that June 2022 highlights included the Jubilee Craft in the Nicholsons centre, the farmers market, the world refill day, Father's Day craft and make music day to name a few from the report. The baton relay had also taken place, which saw people attend and celebrate the event, which was well received within the community. There was also a lot of up-and-coming events that were coming to the town centre over the coming months.

Councillor Taylor thanked Robyn Bunyan for the achievements that she spoke of and asked if an increase in footfall in the town centre had been down to these events.

Robyn Bunyan replied by saying that more work had to be done to pinpoint footfall. She said that Thursday was a good day to use as a marker for footfall and it had been seen to increase on that day.

Councillor Bhangra asked how businesses and persons of interest were aware of Maidenhead and what things were out there to attract them to Maidenhead over other locations.

Robyn Bunyan admitted that more needed to be done, but things were happening. The Make Maidenhead social media platform was growing and was well engaged with. The My Royal Borough platform also existed, but more work needed to be done to shout about the good news that was out there about Maidenhead.

Councillor McWilliams credited Robyn Bunyan's enthusiasm and said that Maidenhead had improved so much in recent years. He asked how important it was for Maidenhead to have a mixed demographic.

Robyn Bunyan said that it was vital and that there was a huge mixed demographic of people that visited the waterside area of Maidenhead. The plan moving forward was to look at the different people that existed within the town and how they could best be catered to.

Councillor Taylor said that it was important to keep areas on the periphery of the town centre looking vibrant and fresh, ready for when the regeneration of the Nicholsons centre occur, to not deter visitors from attending the town centre. She also asked what hashtags Councillors and others should use when visiting the town, to provide the best exposure for the town centre.

Robyn Bunyan replied by saying that Make Maidenhead was on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram via the @MakeMaidenhead account name. She implored for Councillors when visiting the town to tag the account and use the #MakeMaidenhead.

Councillor Hill admitted that the town had a very vibrant part to it near the waterside, whereas the other part was maybe not so vibrant. The challenge was to get this vibrancy to exist across the whole town centre, and not just one singular location.

Robyn Bunyan agreed with this and said that the high street currently was more of a passageway between the 2 vibrant sides of the town. The hard work needed to continue, and things needed to be in place ready for when the Nicholsons centre was demolished.

The Chairman thanked Robyn Bunyan for her report and her attendance. Robyn Bunyan then offered Councillors the chance to have a walk around the town with her at their leisure to see the new sites that the town had to offer.

ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

Councillor Hill suggested an update on when the Nicholsons centre would be redeveloped and said that he and residents wished to be updated on a timeframe.

Any further suggestions could be made offline, with the addition of any suggestions made by residents also.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The forum noted the dates of future meetings.

The Chairman ended the meeting by explaining why he had to have Councillor Singh removed from the meeting. This being said, Councillor Singh had left the meeting on his own accord and was not removed. The Chairman apologised for this but said that all members were required to be respectful to each other and to officers.

The meeting, which began at 6.32 pm, finished at 8.10 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....