

WINDSOR TOWN FORUM

Monday 16 January 2023

Present: Councillors Samantha Rayner (Chairman), David Cannon (Vice-Chairman), David Hilton, Shamsul Shelim, Gary Muir, Jon Davey, Neil Knowles, Helen Price and Wisdom Da Costa

Present virtually: Councillors Sayonara Luxton

Also in attendance virtually: Councillor Carole Da Costa, Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra and Councillor Donna Stimson

Officers: Oran Norris-Browne and Paul Roach

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Tisi.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

MINUTES

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meetings held on 13 July 2022 & 15 November 2022 were a true and accurate record.

Councillor Price asked the Chair if the actions that arose from these meetings could be discussed. Oran Norris-Browne, Democratic Services Officer confirmed that all actions had been completed. Councillor Price did however raise the question about the Forum's powers within the Terms of Reference via the constitution, which the forum should consider moving forward.

Thames Valley Police Update

PCSO Liz Davidson introduced the update from Thames Valley Police (TVP) by saying that the crime statistics were to be shared, were from a month ago and that they specifically covered Windsor Town Centre. There were 8 reports of Anti-Social behaviour and sadly 28 thefts from motor vehicles. No reported bikes were stolen. The Chair asked if at future meetings, a report could be sent through to the forum members in advance of the meetings. This was taken on board by PC Jon Brooks who said that they had been asked to attend the meeting at short notice, due to Sergeant Stef Day having to attend some last-minute training.

PC Jon Brooks said that the neighbourhood team had started the 'have your say' campaign, which was conducted through various stalls around the borough. The surveys were also to be sent out and shared via the Thames Valley Alert and also accessible through the TVP website. The purpose of the survey was to set out the goals for the forthcoming year. The Chair asked if the results of the surveys could be brought back to a potential future meeting. PC Jon Brooks said that he would certainly feed this back.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa said that it would be useful for a scope of possibilities be provided to residents in the surveys, to show what could be provided from TVP to residents. He also agreed with the Chair's comments on receiving reports prior to the meeting. PC Jon Brooks said that Inspector Bennett would be attending future meetings in place of Jeff Pick.

Councillor Hilton said that he believed someone was to take over Jeff Pick's role and asked if this could be followed up outside of the meeting. Councillor Cannon said that a role was to be developed and was in place to be more visible in the near future.

Councillor Hilton asked what the nature was of the incidents of anti-social behaviour. The details were not known, however a more recent one was the throwing of eggs, so it could have been along similar lines. Councillor Hilton said that trends were of interest to residents and that he would like to see this within future reports.

Councillor Price asked about an incident on the riverside and what had happened with this. Councillor Davey had been chasing this offline and said that he had reassurances that it was a priority of TVP and that extensive conversations had occurred offline about it.

Councillor Price then provided some feedback on the 'have your say' stand and said that it was quite plain and needed a large sign for example, in order to attract more people towards it. She also commented on the lack of information that was available to residents about scams nowadays but said that this was present however at the stand earlier in the day.

John Holland, resident from Sheet Street echoed the comments of the Chair that a written report in advance of the meeting would be very beneficial. He said that car pollution was a big issue in Windsor, especially during the guard change. Cars were idle for 15 minutes or so at a time, with their engines switched on. He had mentioned it many times to the police and had even asked them to have a word with these offenders, and he was told no. PC Jon Brooks responded by saying it was difficult as the officers were instructed to stay on their posts during guard changes for security reasons, however as he was not a part of these proceedings, he said that he would feed this back to the correct officers.

Ed Wilson, resident, asked about car thefts and any information about this that could be provided. PCSO Liz Davidson said that there was currently a task team that was tackling thefts from motor vehicles. The main car parks that were being targeted were the two main tourist ones. These were River Street, and the Castle car parks. TVP were very hot on this currently.

PC Jon Brooks asked if Inspector Bennett could be sent the invite for forums moving forward. Oran Norris-Browne confirmed that this would be fine.

ACTION: Oran to add Inspector Dan Bennett to any invites moving forward if TVP were on the agenda.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and all of their hard work and then summarised some of the action points that had arisen from their update, for the officers to feed back to fellow officers. These were:

- A report sent through by TVP prior to the publication of the agenda of the forum.
- More information on the nature of incidents and not just plain statistics.
- Follow up on the idling cars situation during the guard change.
- More information circulated on scams.

Windsor Homeless Project

Jeff Hudson, Chair of Windsor Cristian Action, said that the needs of the vulnerable within the community had never been greater. The charity had been established in 2013 with an aim of supporting vulnerable people within the Windsor community by giving them access to immediate support, but also helping them in the process of rebuilding their lives.

Jeff Hudson went on to say that there were four different areas to the charity, which were all divided into different projects that each focused on supporting the vulnerable. These were as followed:

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

Jeff Hudson then gave some context and added detail on each of the four. The Windsor Food Share's main aim was to support the hungry families and individuals that resided within Windsor with non-perishable food. He stated that the rise in inflation had of course seen a rise in costs and this therefore had hit the most vulnerable within society. More pressure had now been placed upon households due to these rising costs. He said that many of the people that visited Windsor Food Share had homes of their own and worked jobs, however the organisation ensured that even the most basic of food items were provided to fight against poverty. There was a salaried manager and also up to 50 volunteers. In 2022 alone, meals were provided for up to 7,000 plus individuals, although maybe repeat persons.

The Windsor Homeless Project supported the homeless and vulnerable people of Windsor with a safe space via a local day centre. They are provided with hot meals and also other services that are essential for wellbeing. These included healthcare and professional housing & tenancy advice. This gave the homeless and vulnerable a strong foundation to build upon, to improve their lives. Services that were also available included laundry, access to the internet and also access to a telephone. 12 guests had been setup in housing and 3 had been seen to go into full-time employment too.

The Street Angels provided care and safety to predominantly young adults and also rough sleepers during the night who required medical attention, shelter or maybe some other type of support. The night time economy in Windsor played a key role in this, often taking in people who required assistance late at night. Patrols occurred nearby to clubs and pubs, and paramedics also attended these patrols too.

Finally, 'More than a Shelter', provided overnight accommodation and meals to a range of rough sleepers during the three coldest months of the year. These were predominantly January, February, and March. A warm hub was also to be set up during the days of the week in which the day centre was not open. This would provide not only food, but also company to those people who were feeling lonely or isolated in their community during the week.

Jeremy Crame, Trustee of Windsor Cristian Action, said that after a lengthy search for a premises, a property was acquired on Alma Road. This was to become the hub for all four of the above services, and that it would be beneficial to bring all of them together under one roof.

Jeremy Crame then set out a vision for the building, but of course stressed the need for additional funding to make any of these a reality. They included the following:

- A fully working kitchen to help cook and provide hot meals to vulnerable people.
- Essential storage facilities for the Windsor Foodshare.
- A community café, to act as a safe space to meet people and get advice. (In time it would be beneficial for this to run by guests).
- A kitchen garden, where the whole community could get involved together.
- Educational and rehabilitation support services.
- Segregated sleeping facilities during the winter months.
- Shower and laundry facilities.
- A hub for the Street Angels' equipment.

Jeremy Crame added that planning permission had been received, which allowed for them to make alterations to the building. The building had now been completely gutted and a new central heating system had been installed. Double glazed windows and doors were also going to be installed by the end of February. The RBWM Property Company had been assisting the

organisation throughout. Depending on funding, the aim was to have the Alma Road site open by Summer 2023.

Jeremy Crame added that they had successfully raised a large proportion of funds via donations, grants, and pledges. He did note however that there was still an £80,000 shortfall in order to complete the project in its entirety. He admitted that the rising cost of materials and labour were a big risk that required continued focus and review, especially in the current financial climate.

In 2022, the Homeless Project helped 187 individuals who came through the doors. He admitted that covid was the best thing to ever happen to the homeless as it urged Central Government to house the homeless for their protection, with an aim to move them into eventual permanent housing. He said that the press releases for Windsor always stated that there were no rough sleepers, however this was not true, with 9 new people being registered last month alone. Many of whom, the average person would never meet as they could be potentially too shy or ashamed of their situation.

The Chair thanked them for their presentation and also their invitation to her before Christmas to their fundraiser. She acknowledged that there were many moving moments discussed that day.

Councillor Price asked for clarity over the geographical scope of the service. Jeremy Crame said that it was a wider area than just Windsor. Locations included areas such as Ascot, Maidenhead, Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury. Ingrid Fernandes, Windsor Homeless Project, said that they had reached out to people across the borough to inform them of the projects, to spread awareness and the need for funding.

Councillor Price then said that the increase of persons attending the Windsor Food Share was 30% year on year opposed to 20%. She added that the projects also aligned extremely well with the borough's Corporate Plan, which was very pleasing to see.

Councillor Hilton said that it was very sensible what had been done, bringing all the four services under one roof. He agreed with Councillor Price's comments about it being well aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan. He wanted there to be more exposure of the project. Ingrid Fernandes said that they had many volunteers and also a social networking team, but she would feed back. Jeff Hudson agreed and said that they already had lots of willing people who were happy to help, but of course more exposure would be even better.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa agreed with Councillor Price's points also and acknowledged that the poverty line was beginning to increase, which in turn was going to bring more demand to the services that they provided. He asked if there were any trends on why people were coming to in to use the services that were on offer. Jeremy Crame said that the number of people who registered with them fluctuated massively throughout the year. He said that he had been with two individuals earlier that day who resided in the stairwell of the Waitrose car park.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa then asked about the Street Angels and asked if any trends were being seen with this now that the night time economy had opened back up again after covid. Jeff Hudson said that there were no real trends, however levels of engagement were back to similar levels to before the pandemic occurred.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa then asked if the Food Network could attend a future forum to discuss what they were experiencing to get a picture of the wider issue within Windsor. The Chair thanked him for his suggestion and said that she would meet offline with Ingrid Fernandes about this matter with the appropriate officers in RBWM, such as Jesal Dhokia.

Councillor Price asked where people could go to find out more about the services that were on offer and how they could contact them. Jeremy Crame said that challenges that had arisen

included the issues of both insurance and funding. Ingrid Fernandes encouraged people to visit their website for further information which was 'windsorchristianaction.org'. She also invited any interested parties to attend the site.

Councillor Davey asked how the service managed the distribution of time sensitive vouchers, and how they managed the separation of people from the service afterwards. Jeff Hudson said that people would always be assisted if they came to the Food Share, and vouchers were given out for 1, 2 or 4 weeks. Discussions would then take place about whether further ongoing provisions would be provided, but he was not involved in these discussions.

Councillor Knowles said that they were the jewel in the crown of the borough and commended their efforts. He said with regards to the Street Angels, that they were the key enabler of the nightlife in Windsor. He said that people came to Windsor to enjoy the nightlife, because they felt safe to do so, and that was because of the success of the Street Angels. Jeff Hudson thanked him for his kind words and said that they hoped that the Street Angels could go from strength to strength, working alongside TVP.

Ed Wilson asked what the key risks were for the Alma Road development currently. Jeremy Crame said that the main issue was funding. The building had been surveyed, broken pipes fixed, and vermin exterminated.

Councillor Carole Da Costa said that her understanding was that the borough already paid a charity group to help vulnerable people get healthcare and back into work etc. She asked was there a reason that people were not accessing this group, and instead came to them. Jeremy Crame said that if they went to the borough, they would not receive as much wider advice as if they came to the group themselves.

Councillor Cannon said that himself and others on the forum were volunteers at the 'More than a Shelter' group and he said that the move to Alma Road was very commendable and thanked everybody for attending. The Chair echoed this.

Town Manager Update

Paul Roach, Windsor & Eton Town Manager, began his update by apologising for not sending out a report in advance of the meeting. He said that due to a very full Christmas programme, he had worked 40 days straight and therefore had been on annual leave since boxing day.

Paul Roach briefly outlined some key statistics from HM Queen Elizabeth II's funeral and procession. 900 stewards were deployed within Windsor on that day, with around 85-100 of those being volunteers. Over 6,000 police officers were deployed to manage security arrangements. Around 102,000 people attended the funeral cortege in Old Windsor, the Long Walk and Home Park. Over 500,000 visitor movements were recorded during the week prior to the funeral.

Paul Roach said that a number of businesses in Windsor held a royal warrant and that anyone within the next 18 months who held this, would have to close/discontinue certain products or stores. A warrant would have to be obtained for King Charles III. A bank holiday was said to have cost the UK economy roughly £2 billion.

In terms of footfall for December, Paul Roach said that levels were beginning to look very similar to the pre-pandemic levels that were seen in 2019. November and December levels were in fact higher than the 2019 numbers. The total number of visitors to Windsor to date was 7,132,033, which was up 23.3% on 2021. The busiest day recorded was Christmas Eve, which saw a footfall number of 33,624 visitors, with a peak time of 2pm.

Paul Roach said that parking levels had generally been lower than 2019 levels, however they were increasing. The level of coach park figures were still very low, although it was seen that

there was an increase in international visitors coming to the town centre. He then mentioned some new stores that had opened in recent months, with some currently under development/offer such as Greggs, Zara Plus and Chicken House.

Paul Roach then shared some images with the forum members, which showed the enormous turnouts that were seen in Windsor during the Christmas period. These included the Christmas Lights switch on, the living advent calendar, the Windsor Yards Festive Weekend, Carols on the Hill, Windsor on Ice, and the Windsor Brewery. Some events had only 80 people attend, but then some saw up to 300 visitors.

The Chair thanked Paul Roach for his update and used her powers as Chair, to invite any questions from residents first before forum members. A Windsor resident, said that in the town, there were vast amounts of overgrown vegetation such as hedges and trees. Along the pavements also, particularly around the Victoria Barracks and all along Sheet Street, there were an enormous number of weeds growing through cracks in the pavement. He said that during the summer months, if similar heat was seen as it was during 2022, then these would cause a danger to residents and likely ignite. He implored for the borough to tackle this issue as a priority. The Chair appreciated his comments and said that Paul Roach would look into this offline along with his team and also Councillor Bhangra who was Cabinet Member for that area.

Mr Griffin, resident from Windsor, then came forward and thanked Paul Roach for his presentation, but also expressed concern that his updates were always looking back at the successes and what had come to pass. Whereas residents wished to look forward to the future and to see what was planned and up and coming within Windsor. He then expressed major concerns over the stairwell and the bridge that linked the coach park to the train station in Alexandra gardens. He said that the state of it was a disgrace. He pleaded with the forum to make it about the future and to stop looking at the past. Paul Roach said that money had now been allocated for the walkway and that works were due to be starting very soon. The Chair said that this would begin in February along with the Castle Hill project in the Spring.

John Holland agreed with the points that had been raised about looking to the future and the forum becoming more effective. He said that he was one of the five people who attended the last forum meeting in November 2022, which was not a proportionate representation of the town's population figures. He said when it appeared on the BBC News website, with words used such as 'disgraceful', the forum ought to have taken note of this. He asked forum members if they were happy with the way that the forum was conducted. He said that it was an irrelevance and only existed because residents were denied a Town Council.

John Holland then expressed concern over getting items onto the agenda, where he admitted you could, however, only to be considered to come to the next meeting in 3 months' time. Urgent matters that residents wished to bring up at the meeting, were being delayed until a future meeting. The Chair thanked him for his comments and said that she was very happy to hear from residents and also wished to have the next meeting in-person, as it was a lot more engaging. John Holland asked for a future item on the agenda, where residents could ask questions of Councillors at the meeting.

ACTION: Resident Questions to be added as a standing agenda item.

Mr Griffin said that Windsor had lots of street parking, however there were very little Electric Vehicle Charging Points. He asked if a consultation group could be set up for Windsor residents to discuss the issue in question. He said that the current consultation that was out was useful, however Windsor specific was important.

ACTION: Oran to explore adding EV Charging points in Windsor to the next forum meeting in collaboration with the Chair.

Ed Wilson asked Paul Roach about the IHG group moving into the Windsor Dials and what impact it would have on the town's economy. Paul Roach's response was that up to 600 people would be moving in. It was likely that this would be phased in gradually, but the effect would be a very positive one on the town's economy. The Chair said that IHG encouraged its staff to shop within the town centre. There were also a number of vacant office blocks in the town, and that some offices were currently being refurbished and offered out for rent.

Ed Wilson's second question was on the resident's parking discount scheme and referred to it being run by MI5 as it was so secret! Were there any plans to promote it in Central Windsor over the next few months. Paul Roach said that the scheme was not necessarily a secret one and that promotions of the scheme did occur but acknowledged that more could be done. He added that there had been no significant drop in car parking numbers.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa suggested a Task and Finish Group to look at the forum and the way that it runs and asked residents if they would be interested in getting involved in that to better shape the forum and align it better with the Constitution. The Chair thanked him for his suggestion and said that this could potentially be looked at offline.

ACTION: Oran to discuss with his team about the feasibility of a Task & Finish Group before May 2023.

Councillor Price said that she had been denied the opportunity to incorporate the points made in the Constitution on the town forums and again 6 months ago, she asked for the Constitution to be looked at too. The suggested agenda item of air pollution was redirected towards the People Overview & Scrutiny Panel a few months ago as it was deemed a borough-wide topic and did not apply solely to just Windsor. She also said that the emphasis should not always be upon the town centre with all of the items too.

Councillor Knowles said that the forum was a 'talking shop' and that it was a pointless exercise. More residents turned up for the Dedworth forum, which was offline and set up by residents. He said that he was a strong supporter of having a Windsor Town Council.

Councillor Davey said that 3 years ago the same questions were being asked by the same people. He said that the Chair should be a resident and that the forum has served its purpose and unless it becomes resident focussed then it has no future.

Councillor Knowles said that the forum should be run the same as the other forums in the borough such as the Dedworth one, where residents ran it.

Mr Griffin asked why the Constitution was not on the website. Oran Norris-Browne advised the Chair that it was on the website and that he would include the link within the minutes.

Windsor Town Forum Terms of Reference - [Part 6 D1 of the Constitution – Page 214.](#)

Councillor Shelim said that the forum should not be made up of Councillors as they had the option to speak to officers whenever they wished, and that residents should come first and that they should be the ones asking questions of officers, not Councillors.

Work Programme

Oran Norris-Browne said that there were currently two items scheduled in for the next forum meeting in March 2023. However, based upon feedback within the meeting from residents, he suggested the forum could if they wished, follow the same procedure as the Maidenhead Town Forum, where there was no work programme and that there was instead a standing item for residents to suggest topics for the next meeting. Oran Norris-Browne could then put these suggestions to officers for their professional opinions on whether the issue required going to

the next forum in a few months' time, and if not, the officer could liaise with the resident directly offline over certain individual cases in between forum meetings.

Oran Norris-Browne encouraged residents to register to speak at other meetings such as Overview & Scrutiny Panels where the topic of air pollution was soon to be discussed and where EV Charging Points had been discussed in November 2022. He also reminded participants that not all things that were being suggested would be guaranteed to be on the next agenda, as this had to be managed carefully.

John Holland said that he would like to suggest the Windsor Vision as an item for the next forum's agenda as well as car pollution.

Councillor Hilton thanked Oran Norris-Browne for his advice and agreed that issues that covered not just Windsor such as EV charging, were indeed better suited for an Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

Fiona, resident from Sheet Street, thanked Paul Roach for his updates and agreed with previous resident comments. She asked if the management and cleaning up of litter could be considered as well as the issue with traffic and car pollution. Fiona also supported the EV Charging points item coming to a future meeting.

Oran Norris-Browne also promoted the use of the Council's Social Media Channels which he utilised to send out posts roughly 6 weeks and 2 weeks before every forum meeting, to encourage residents to submit him questions and topics for discussion.

Ed Wilson thanked Oran Norris-Browne for his points and said that he had written to him several times asking for certain items to be added to future agendas, which Oran had successfully done. He wished for the management and planting of trees to be considered as a future item also.

Items proposed for the next meeting included:

- EV Charging Points in Windsor
- The Windsor Vision
- Car Pollution/Traffic in Windsor
- The cleaning up and management of litter
- The management of existing trees and the planting of new ones

DATE & LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair wished to propose that the next Windsor Town Forum in March 2023 was also held in-person opposed to it being held virtually. Councillor Hilton agreed and said that the current meeting showed that resident engagement was higher and more beneficial when held in-person. All forum members raised their hands when asked if they supported this.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the next Windsor Town Forum in March 2023 be held in-person at York House, Windsor.

The meeting, which began at 6.35 pm, finished at 9.00 pm

Chair.....

Date.....