

DISABILITY AND INCLUSION FORUM

MONDAY, 20 JUNE 2022

PRESENT: Angela Clark (Chairman), Lisa Hughes (Vice-Chairman), Sharon Carrigan, Peter Haley, Victoria Holt, Dominic Manley, Robin Pemberton, Habibah Tariq, Jatinder Singh Rakhra and Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra

Also in attendance: Councillor John Baldwin, Councillor Simon Bond, Councillor Mandy Brar, Councillor David Cannon, Councillor David Coppinger, Councillor Carole Da Costa, Councillor Helen Price, Councillor Shamsul Shelim, Councillor Gurch Singh and Councillor Donna Stimson

Officers: Becky Oates, Ellen McManus-Fry, Rachel Kinniburgh, Rebecca Hatch, Ian Brazier-Dubber, Hayley George, Saloni Radia and Oran Norris-Browne

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all to the Forum and introduced new members Habibah Tariq, Jatinder Singh Rakhra and Victoria Holt.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Sharon Bunce, Tim Clare and Councillor John Bowden.

MINUTES FROM THE LAST FORUM

Lisa Hughes requested that the minutes be amended as follows:

That 'legislation' be changed to 'relevant Department for Transport regulation and guidance' in the first sentence of the Safe Pedestrian Uncontrolled Crossing item.

That 'tolerance of 6mm' be changed to 'no more than 6mm' in the same item.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the March meeting be agreed.

REGENERATION

Ian Brazier-Dubber, Managing Director of RBWM Property Company, introduced himself and outlined the role of RBWM Property Company which was to manage elements of regeneration across the borough. A particular focus had been placed on delivering the two joint ventures of Countryside Homes, which had planning consent for the redevelopment of the Magnet Leisure Centre, and CALA Homes which would be looking at potential development of the golf course.

The Borough Local Plan was formally adopted in February which set out the fixed policies which would be used to assess development within the area and how these developments would be brought forward in the coming years.

Planning consent had been formally granted mid-June 2022 for development of the site of Magnet Leisure Centre on St Cloud's Way which would include 343 residential homes, 87 of which would be affordable homes for rent. 10% of these homes had been designed for fully accessible requirements in line with policy. Development would be commencing towards the end of July 2022 to clear the site, with the first home being completed in Autumn 2024.

With regards to the Nicholson centre, a compulsory purchase order (CPO) was being undertaken to ensure the whole site could be brought together as one development. This

would lead to a public inquiry held by a planning inspector appointed by Michael Gove from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which was scheduled for October 2022.

The borough's interest in the site included the properties on Broadway, including the Nicholson Centre car park and Siena Court. The rest of the site was owned by Areli Investments with a view to beginning development on the site in summer 2023. There was ongoing work to understand how accessibility issues to the high street were sustained once the Shopmobility site was moved to West Street car park.

A supplementary planning document (SPD) would be published for consultation in the summer which would set the framework for the development of Maidenhead Golf Course on Shoppenhanger's Road. Ian Brazier-Dubber welcomed comments on the SPD with regards to accessibility.

The Chairman asked about the number of parking spaces for patients and staff for the two GP surgeries, chemist and two dentist sites on St Cloud's Way.

Ian Brazier-Dubber responded that there were 20 parking spaces to the north of the Cedar Trees Surgery which was allocated to patients and staff.

The Chairman responded that these spaces were totally allocated to doctors and staff, with members of the public having to park in a public car park.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that as part of the ongoing development, temporary parking would remain at the bowling site to provide 50 spaces.

The Chairman asked if the 20 parking spaces would remain solely for the use of doctors and staff since the 50 parking spaces were only temporary.

Ian Brazier-Dubber responded that currently, people were able to park for an hour for free, but other solutions were being looked at.

The Chair also asked for any news of relocation of the Post Office.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that conversations had been ongoing with relevant parties to the Post Office, but no solution had yet been reached.

Peter Haley asked for clarification on Shopmobility and if work would start on the Nicholson car park in summer 2023. Peter Haley also asked if the timings had been looked at to ensure that Shopmobility would be continually accessible as its location would be changing and requested a meeting with Ian Brazier-Dubber to discuss the West Street development.

Ian Brazier-Dubber confirmed that this was the intended start date for development if previous events occurred as planned. Ian Brazier-Dubber also confirmed that this was the case. The new car park would be built first to ensure that this facility was available to shoppers.

ACTION: Ian-Brazier Dubber to meet with Peter Haley to discuss developments on West Street.

Peter Haley asked if facilities with running water and waste facilities would be available as part of the temporary facility.

Ian Brazier-Dubber confirmed that this would be looked into.

Councillor Carole Da Costa confirmed that the 20 parking spaces at the doctors' surgery were solely for the use of staff and expressed concern over the new temporary parking

arrangements for those with mobility issues. Councillor Carole Da Costa asked for unrestricted disabled parking closer to the surgery.

Ian Brazier-Dubber thanked Councillor Carole Da Costa for her comments and confirmed that this would be investigated to ensure spaces were used appropriately.

Dominic Manley expressed disappointment that the building work at the Nicholson Centre had been pushed back and asked whether a two-year build programme would be feasible.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that two years would be a tight delivery programme, but this period should be long enough to deliver the main parts of the site.

Councillor Stimson asked to be involved in the discussions surrounding West Street and expressed concern about the Post Office and Shopmobility.

ACTION: Ian Brazier-Dubber to invite Councillor Stimson to discussions with Peter Haley on West Street.

Councillor Coppinger assured residents that the Post Office was critical and explained that Robyn Bunyan, Maidenhead Town Manager, and Steph James, Service Lead for Economic Growth, were working on solutions. Additionally, Councillor Coppinger assured residents that conversations were ongoing around provisions of healthcare in Maidenhead to ensure the right provisions were in place for residents.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Ian Brazier-Dubber for the update on developments in Maidenhead and asked whether blue-badge spaces would be moved closer to the town centre.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that there was a set of standards that needed to be adhered to with regards to accessible parking arrangements and confirmed that these would be considered.

Councillor Singh thanked Ian Brazier-Dubber for his update and stated that residents were concerned about parking arrangements in the future with regards to the doctors' surgery. Councillor Singh asked why an agreement had not yet been reached with the doctors' surgery surrounding parking arrangements and why a CPO was being used in this instance.

Councillor Singh stated that in 2019, he was informed that a health hub would be created on Reform Road and queried why no extra doctors' facilities had been created in Maidenhead to cope with the increase in housing.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated with regards to a potential health hub on Reform Road, extensive discussions with partners were ongoing and the logistics of funding and structure were being looked at.

Ian Brazier-Dubber clarified that the sites that were being regenerated were not purchased through a CPO but were undertaken through appropriation, which was approved by Cabinet in November 2018, to change the use of the land from commercial to housing.

Peter Haley asked for information regarding the use of St Mark's Hospital in relation to a potential health hub.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that he was seeking information from the NHS estates and was awaiting a response.

The Chairman thanked Ian Brazier-Dubber for his time.

ACTIVE TRAVEL

The Chairman read a statement that had been provided by Tim Golabek, Service Lead for Transport and Infrastructure, on the Active Travel framework.

The Chairman explained that the forum's perspective was that the draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) hadn't considered or included the needs of borough residents and visitors with disabilities. The forum was invited to comment on the draft LCWIP in April and drew attention to the lack of drop kerbs at junctions or across roads and suggested ways to include them. The version which had been submitted to Cabinet had included a brief mention of people with disabilities which was welcomed but the forum felt it did not go far enough. The final LCWIP stated that engagement with people with disabilities would be sought but the Chairman explained that the forum felt that this collaboration would be on a project-by-project basis rather than being built into the LCWIP as whole.

Councillor Price expressed concern that if people could not safely travel around the borough, they would be less likely to leave their home and be at greater risk of loneliness and isolation.

Councillor Carole Da Costa agreed with Councillor Price's comments and stated that Councillor Wisdom Da Costa had made efforts to get drop kerbs installed in his ward of Clewer and Dedworth West since 2014. Councillor Carole Da Costa stated that it was essential for considerations to be included from the beginning of the LCWIP rather than included retrospectively.

Councillor Baldwin expressed frustration at blocked pavements in Clare Road in Maidenhead.

Councillor Brar stated that visually-impaired residents in her ward struggled to leave their house and navigate their neighbourhoods due to a lack of tactile surfacing.

Habibah Tariq, Youth Councillor, stated that as a wheelchair user, she faced difficulties with accessibility with regards to cars parked on pavements and a lack of dropped kerbs.

Lisa Hughes expressed her hope that Cabinet Members would take the forum's comments into account when considering passing the LCWIP.

Councillor Bhangra stated that the Council had been alerted to parking issues on Clare Road and Neil Walters, Parking Principal, had been working to relieve these issues. Councillor Bhangra asked residents to email any issues they may come across to make the Council aware.

Councillor Baldwin clarified that he was referencing issues with bins being left on pavements.

Councillor Bhangra reiterated his request for anyone facing these issues to email the Council.

The Chairman stated that she wished for Councillors attending Cabinet to emphasise the importance of incorporating the needs of disabled people into the Plan.

SAFE PEDESTRIAN UNCONTROLLED CROSSINGS

The Chairman read a statement that provided information relating to crossings in the Furze Platt area.

Lisa Hughes stated that she appreciated the update on both Furze Platt sites, and that some issues at the Queen Street/Broadway junction had been rectified but there were still some issues remaining. Lisa Hughes added that she had sent forum members a guide on how to report issues on the website, but the function lacked an option for accessibility issues.

Councillor Singh apologized on behalf of the borough and stated that he would be taking this up with officers.

Councillor Brar stated that a meeting had been held in February regarding a crossing on Switchback Road North but no work had been forthcoming.

Lisa Hughes stated that a zebra crossing had been installed on Switchback Road near Shifford Crescent.

Becky Hatch, Head of Strategy, stated that Ellen McManus-Fry, Equalities and Community Engagement Officer, would be focusing on strengthening the borough's Local Government Association (LGA) equality framework and the use of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs). Becky Hatch added that significant improvements could be made in the way the Council engaged during the planning of projects and the development of strategy, and suggested holding an offline meeting with members of the forum regarding underlying issues with processes and communications.

ACTION: Becky Hatch to meet with members of the forum.

BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

The Chairman read a statement on the Borough Local Plan (BLP).

Councillor Baldwin stated that the statement was brief but understood why there was a lack of detail given the ongoing legal challenge.

Councillor Price said that she believed that despite the legal challenge, the plan was continuing and applications from developers were being considered.

Councillor Coppinger clarified that the statement was correct and there was no reason to do anything other than follow the plan.

Lisa Hughes stated that she was unclear on how the policies in the BLP would be applied, specifically in reference to policy HO2 which determined housing mix and type and how this would be applied by developers.

Councillor Coppinger stated that he would follow up on this information.

ACTION: Councillor Coppinger to clarify the use of policy HO2 for Lisa Hughes.

REDUCING INEQUALITIES PROJECT

Becky Hatch, Head of Strategy, and Anna Murphy, Policy and Projects Officer, gave a presentation to the forum on the Reducing Inequalities Project. The project aimed to strengthen the collective understanding of inequalities and disadvantage in the borough to inform the development of a strong approach to reducing and preventing inequality.

The project took a broad definition of inequality which looked at outcomes across health, education, employment, skills, housing, income, poverty, deprivation, risky behaviours, and environmental and community inequalities. The project was divided into two phases. The first phase would take place from April to November 2022 and would seek to understand the issues and develop an evidence base. The second phase would take place from November 2022 to April 2023 and would look at developing a shared approach to reducing inequalities.

The borough was one of the most affluent in the country, yet still had over 20,000 residents living in relative deprivation. 5-10% of households were living in poverty, with data suggesting

that these rates may have been higher among families with children and older people which was reflective of national data.

The approach was in line with the Corporate Plan which sought to empower and enable individuals, communities and businesses, invest in prevention, put customers at the heart of all the borough does and focus on reducing inequalities. Working outside of existing service boundaries would be key to tackle inequalities effectively.

Becky Hatch emphasised that engagement with the forum would be key to project success and asked for the biggest issues facing members of the forum.

ACTION: Becky Hatch and the Chairman of the forum to hold an offline discussion.

The Chairman asked if the evidence collected during phase one of the project would be published.

Becky Hatch confirmed that this would be the case and stated that a stakeholder event would be set up later in 2022 to share the draft data that had been gathered which the Chairman would be invited to.

Peter Haley thanked Becky Hatch and Anna Murphy for the presentation and asked if the project would feed into the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Peter Haley also emphasised that the voluntary sector would be a valuable source of knowledge for the project.

Becky Hatch stated that the Reducing Inequalities Project wouldn't directly relate to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, but this was a fund of interest that would be a possible avenue for funding.

Councillor Price asked why the aim of reducing demand on high-cost services had been given as an objective rather than an expected outcome of the Project.

Becky Hatch responded that reducing demand for high-cost services was part of the medium-term financial plan and would allow for the redistribution of this money to preventative services. Preventing and addressing issues early would have two positive outcomes of improving outcomes for residents while reducing demand.

Dominic Manley asked when the project would be incorporated into the Corporate Plan.

Becky Hatch stated that the Corporate Plan would be refreshed at the end of 2022 to reflect on the goals and progress that had been achieved.

HOME ENERGY GRANTS

Hayley George, Energy Projects Manager, gave a presentation to the forum on home energy grants offered by the borough. To give context to the presentation, Hayley George explained that a climate emergency was declared by the borough in 2019, which led to the Environment and Climate Strategy being adopted in December 2020. Within the borough, 29% of emissions were from heating homes using fossil fuels. Rising energy prices meant that fuel poverty would likely rise, with data from Ofgem suggesting that the number of households in fuel poverty in the UK could double to 12 million by October 2022.

6.4% of the borough's population were in fuel poverty, and Hayley George emphasised that despite the borough being within the lowest 10 areas for fuel poverty we should not dismiss the importance of supporting vulnerable residents.

With regards to grants, the borough had applied to the Sustainable Warmth scheme run by central government which awarded £1.3m to be spent on energy efficient upgrades by the end

of the scheme deadline in March 2023. These upgrades included projects such as wall, floor and roof insulation, window upgrades and solar panels.

In order to be eligible for the scheme, residents must be private homeowners or privately renting. Household income must be below £30,000 and/or the resident must be in receipt of benefits, and the property must be difficult to keep warm, with an EPC rating of D-F.

Hayley George highlighted the Flexible Home Improvement Loan which was overseen by Dawn Howse in the Adults, Health and Commission Directorate. The scheme was available to residents over the age of 60 and could be used to support the purchase of repair works and home improvement.

Hayley George welcomed efforts to spread the word of both schemes.

The Chairman asked about schemes available for residents living in housing association properties.

Hayley George clarified that the council does not own any social housing stock but highlighted the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). Hayley George had been attending Abri's meetings to discuss their applications to this fund.

Lisa Hughes thanked Hayley George for the presentation and asked about data collection for people who were renting and applied to these schemes.

Hayley George thanked Lisa Hughes for the question and stated that she would discuss this with Warmworks as the borough's scheme partner to see how data was being measured on landlords' commitments to paying one-third of the measure install costs.

ACTION: Hayley George to discuss data collection with Warmworks.

Councillor Stimson thanked Hayley George for the presentation and stated that the borough worked with housing associations to raise awareness of schemes. Councillor Stimson stated that sustainability tips were available on RBWM Together and emphasised that this would be a key issue in the winter.

Councillor Price highlighted the work of Draught Busters, a voluntary organisation who worked on reducing draughts in residents' homes. Councillor Price also drew attention to the Household Support Grant which went towards helping people with the cost of energy bills and was administered by the Baby Bank and the West Windsor Hub within the borough.

Councillor Singh thanked Hayley George for the presentation and stated that his ward of St. Mary's was one of the most deprived in the borough. Councillor Singh emphasised the need to reach out to people who wouldn't necessarily know where to look for information regarding home energy grants.

Hayley George thanked Councillor Singh for his comments and stated that this was being looked at. Hayley George confirmed that a group of staff members throughout the council has been formed to increase the awareness of these schemes and to encouraged staff on the ground, such as resident liaison officers, to identify those who are at risk of fuel poverty. Focus groups had been dropping leaflets to households, but the borough was looking at ways to increase its outreach.

Councillor Brar asked how these schemes would be publicised to residents who didn't have computers and whether any leaflets were able to be distributed to residents.

Hayley George re-emphasised her explanation that leaflets had been shared with staff members across the council and the sharing of communications was on-going and ever-expanding. Hayley emphasised that new ideas and connections were always welcome.

Leaflets and communications provided by the scheme partner had been shared along with the Communications team.

ACTION: Hayley George to share leaflets from Greater South East Energy Hub with Councillors.

Councillor Carole Da Costa stated that she believed that residents living in housing association on pre-paid energy meters would benefit the most from these schemes as they were among the most vulnerable residents.

Hayley George agreed with Councillor Carole Da Costa's comments and stated that the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund was available to residents of social housing.

The Chairman thanked Hayley George for the presentation.

WINDSOR PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Saloni Radia, Economic Development Officer, introduced herself and outlined her role. Saloni Radia explained that from the beginning of the Covid pandemic, the expectation had been that many people would lose their jobs as a result of sectors contracting with lots of people in need of jobs. However, the issue that transpired in its place was one of vacancies, with many businesses in the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors looking for staff.

A number of job fairs had been held by the borough and its partners from March to June in Windsor, with over 800 people attending and many partner employers joining the fairs.

With regards to disability and inclusion, talks had been ongoing to understand the issues faced by people with disabilities regarding employment skills and training. In addition, work had been ongoing with Parallel Lifestyle who had organised the Parallel Windsor event, which was created as a festival of inclusivity. A skills and career zone had been planned with partners such as Unilever and Legoland but unfortunately the event had to be cancelled due to rail strikes. Plans were ongoing to regroup and hold another event.

Work was also ongoing with the Visit Windsor sub-group to understand the issues and concerns faced by people with disabilities with a focus on employment opportunities as work progressed. Saloni Radia emphasised that work was in the early stages.

Lisa Hughes thanked Saloni Radia for the update and praised her innovative and passionate approach to addressing employment skills and training for people with disabilities. Lisa Hughes hoped that something would come out of the preparation that had been completed for the Parallel Windsor which she hoped the Council would support.

Peter Haley stated that he would also have attended the Parallel Windsor event in his capacity of CEO of People to Places. The organisation had a European Social Funded project on supporting people into the transport sector through volunteering.

Saloni Radia thanked Lisa Hughes for her comments and stated that Parallel Windsor would have been a great opportunity to make local employers aware of how valuable employment people with disabilities could be for their business.

The Chairman thanked Saloni Radia for the update provided to the forum.

MAKEABILITY

Robert Monk, Case Officer at Remap Berkshire, gave a presentation on the work of the charity. Remap was a registered charity that made free, bespoke aids for the disabled that were not otherwise available.

The charity had completed over 3,500 projects nationally in 2021 through their network of over 900 engineers.

To request work, people could contact Robert Monk by email or telephone. An assigned engineer would visit the client and agree the work required, then make and deliver the aid to the client.

Robert Monk encouraged members of the forum to spread the word of the charity to those who may benefit.

Dominic Manley stated that Remap were building an aid for his wheelchair.

The Chairman thanked Robert Monk for the presentation.

DATE OF NEXT FORUM

The Forum noted that the next meeting would be held on 19 September 2022.

The meeting, which began at 11.00 am, finished at 1.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....