

## PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday 31 January 2023

Present: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Greg Jones, Maureen Hunt, Sayonara Luxton, Shamsul Shelim, Leo Walters, Catherine Del Campo, Mandy Brar, Gurch Singh and Jon Davey

Also in attendance: Councillor David Cannon, Councillor Phil Haseler, Councillor Samantha Rayner and Councillor Andrew Johnson

Also in attendance virtually: Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra, Councillor Donna Stimson, Councillor David Hilton and Councillor Ewan Larcombe

Officers: Oran Norris-Browne, Alysse Strachan, Andrew Durrant and Andy Aldridge

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Taylor & Reynolds and also Co-Optee Parish Councillor Pat McDonald. Councillor Del Campo substituted for Councillor Reynolds.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

### Thames Valley Police Annual Presentation

The Chairman began by informing the panel that he had decided to change the order of the agenda items, where the Thames Valley Police would give their presentation first, followed by the Youth Council.

**AGREED: That the order of the agenda be altered as per the above.**

The panel considered a verbal presentation from members of the Thames Valley Police that was provided by John Campbell, Chief Constable, John Groenen, Detective Chief Inspector, Clare Knibbs, LPA Commander & also Matthew Barber, Police & Crime Commissioner.

John Campbell began by providing the panel with a brief overview of the Thames Valley Police in numbers. He stated that they were the largest non-metropolitan force in England and Wales, which covered 2,200 square miles over 3 different counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire. This area had a population of 2.5 million, with in excess of 6 million annual visitors. He then outlined key members of his management team within Thames Valley.

John Campbell said that within Thames Valley, there were 4861 Police Officers, 3384 Police staff, 288 PCSO's, 229 Special Constables, plus many volunteers, cadets, and even mini police. This data was correct as of October 2022 and included regional units of counter terrorism policing in the South East. He said that as part of an uplift programme, they were working hard towards building a workforce that reflected its communities. They received more than 1,600 police officer applications in 2022. 147 of recruits were from a Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic background and 594 of the recruits were also female.

John Campbell then noted that a lot of what people heard about the police were the negative things and the things that they did not do. He however wanted to share with the panel, all of the things which the police had done. From 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 there were

497,857 contacts made by the public. Of which, 90,339 incidents were attended too with 15,099 arrests being made. 2,400 drug dealing and possession crimes were recorded, with 1844 drug possession arrests being made.

John Campbell made note that domestic abuse formal action was up 44%, which although it was negative thing, the statistic was positive as it showed that more people were being encouraged to actually report this. Rape, sexual offences, stalking & harassment, and the number of crimes resulting in formal action being taken were all also up from the same point last year. 4,205 road collisions were attended, 3,319 missing persons were found, and 319 different events were policed by Thames Valley Police. Mental health distress was also a major thing that was impacting modern society too, and 810 people who were experiencing this were attended too.

People could also now be arrested under the Mental Health Act if they proved a danger to themselves or others. Unfortunately, 800 sudden deaths were also attended too by Thames Valley Police, which in turn meant officers had to deliver news to families of the deceased. 658 reported crimes of assault against officers also occurred in that period alone.

John Campbell then outlined a few other highlights of Thames Valley Police. These were as followed:

- National rollout of Project Vigilant.
- Accredited organisation of White Ribbon.
- Menopause Friendly Accreditation.
- Awarded Trailblazer Status.
- DBS – Outstanding Status.
- Top 5 forces for Firearms Licensing.

John Campbell then discussed Operation London Bridge. He said that he had to draft in police from other areas such as Milton Keynes, as the events in Windsor were unique ones, and ones in which Thames Valley Police were very proud to police.

John Groenen then outlined some key statistics within Windsor & Maidenhead specifically in the last 9 months. These were as followed:

- 7,892 reports of crime – 3% increase.
- 1,254 reports of domestic abuse – 5.2% increase.
- 858 reports of vehicle crime – 39% increase.
- 781 reports of violence with injury – 2% decrease.
- 28 knife enable crimes – 15% decrease.
- 211 sexual offences – 27% increase.
- 26 rapes – 18% increase.

The LPA's key priorities were to prevent violence against women & girls, violence against the person and victim engagement and satisfaction. The challenges were to increase community engagement. These included things such as Thames Valley Alerts, the strategic leaders monthly meeting, a review and refresh of neighbourhood engagement plans and a focus on events with the greatest possible engagement opportunities.

John Groenen then discussed knife crime, and specifically the week between 11 and 18 November 2022. Four knife amnesty bins were put out in Windsor & Maidenhead, where 118 knives were recovered overall. 134 were recovered across the whole of Berkshire including that 118. There were 6 different stop checks of habitual knife carriers and 3 arrests were made for aggravated burglary. Numerous knife crime inputs to schools were made and information was provided to children, who in turn would have distributed this to parents.

Councillor Greg Jones said that one of his residents was mugged last Saturday night. He asked if it would not be beneficial for more foot patrols to be seen at both day and night to prevent this happening. John Groenen said that a meeting was held every 2 weeks where all

intelligence was fed into, and if it was apparent that Maidenhead was a constant issue for crime, then this is where they would task their officers. They would follow the data.

Councillor Greg Jones said that a lot of shops in the town centre would perhaps not report the crimes, and therefore it would not be brought up within the fortnightly meeting. John Campbell said that shoplifting levels had increased, and he also stated that he was a big advocate for the physical presence of officers on the street. However, there was a fine balance between doing this and having officers at the ready on call in vehicles. Clare Knibbs added that they had just set up an assessment and investigative unit in Berkshire, where the CCTV could be livestreamed straight to the office. The implications may not be visibly seen; however, patterns of offending were occurring in the background leading to a better service overall.

Councillor Walters said that the issue of travellers had been omitted from the presentation. He said that he had seen a decrease of their presence in the last year and wondered why this could perhaps be. John Campbell said that the local community often did not like the traveller community entering into their own communities, however sometimes people did not even raise an eyebrow to it. He added that there had now been a change in legislation, which gave the police more power to intervene in significant issues. These new powers had been used on a number of occasions. Resources across the force could then be used to enforce both the old and new legislation. Transit sites could be used to move the travelling community on from one location to the site, however local authorities were not too keen on the ideas of these transit sites.

Councillor Brar asked what the outcome was of the street light survey from around a year ago and how they were liaising with the Council on it. John Campbell said that they would look into this and provide a written response to Councillor Brar offline.

**ACTION: TVP to provide Councillor Brar with a written response to her question on the results of the street lighting survey offline.**

Councillor Davey said that he had an idea for the Council, the police, and the community wardens. He said that he believed that the Council currently collected the funds for the police to the tune of around £17 million per year. He said that if the police gave some of that money back to the Council and ring-fenced it to police activities, £3 million could fund 60 new community wardens and PCSO's. He said that this would provide a very safe environment to the community. John Campbell agreed with the principle of increasing police presence, however said that the money was used for many officers who were investigating offences behind closed doors such as online crimes.

Councillor Del Campo said that she had cause to use the 101 service recently and it had taken her around 30 minutes. She compared it to the current struggles of the NHS. She said that some communication around how to get people to the right place could be beneficial to aid waiting times. John Campbell agreed and said that the current average waiting time for 101 was around 4 minutes. Averages did change and one day it was 1 minute 20 seconds and 1 was just 50 seconds, so it varied. He admitted that they were not currently getting it right for some people, however for some people it was working fine. They wished for non-emergency situations to be filtered through the online website, if possible, but work needed to be done on this.

Councillor Singh said that officer numbers were comparatively very low to other authorities. He said that the stalking and harassment figures appeared to him as being a concern and asked why this had increased by 55%. He then spoke about bike thefts in Maidenhead town centre and if the cost-of-living crisis had seen any effects on petty thefts, and it leading onto more serious thefts due to the current economic state.

John Campbell said that compared to 3 years ago, the stats for burglaries were down 21%. With people working from home, this decreased the opportunities for burglaries to be committed. He added that a lot of harassment occurred online. A spike in vehicle thefts had

also been seen in recent times and he said that he would not be surprised if the cost-of-living crisis had seen an effect on this.

Councillor Singh then asked about crimes committed as a result of the night time economy and wished for police to be seen more often patrolling the town centre. He then mentioned about his concerns around a new car park opening at Stafferton Way, which could be accessed through dark narrow alley ways only accessible to the police on foot. John Campbell said that unfortunately poorly lit areas laid with the local authority and not with the police. Councillor Shelim thanked the police for their presentation and asked what the main reasons were for the police being stationed in certain places in Windsor to deal with the night time economy and if the weather affected crimes. John Campbell admitted that the police loved rain and agreed that the weather did indeed have an effect on policing. John Groenen said that he would feed back the comments to the night time economy group.

Matthew Barber said that he was looking to fund 80 additional officers and have them on the books by the end of the current financial year and additionally, that they would exceed their home office target. He admitted that there were lots of challenges that faced the police, which were not affected by visible foot patrols such as domestic violence and online sexual abuse. However, he also admitted that some indeed were affected by this. Now was the time to invest in community policing teams. He said that it was not all bad, but the bad things were what people would focus on. With regards to the discussions on the 101 service, £6 million extra would be needed to man phones, which would decrease waiting times, however this would be beyond the limits of Council tax levels.

Matthew Barber wished to enhance digital contact between the public and the police. He said that the modern day with online shopping showed that this worked and over the next 12 to 18 months, a new online system would hopefully be implemented to aid this 101 service. He thanked John Campbell for maintaining a good service during his time as the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police.

Councillor Davey asked if Matthew Barber was looking to take over the Council's CCTV system and if this would be purchased or merely handed over. Matthew Barber said that he proposed a Thames Valley wide network be created and be maintained and operated by Thames Valley Police. He wished to seek a contribution from local authorities moving forward, however noted that not all local authorities would want to sign up to this voluntary network. RBWM already had a good network of CCTV compared to some neighbouring authorities and therefore authorities such as Slough and Milton Keynes were being focussed on first.

Councillor Singh said that Maidenhead had struggled with community policing for some time and thanked Matthew Barber for his recruitment drive. He asked if officers had been poached by other police networks with an increase in pay being used as an incentive, as it was with the Metropolitan police. Matthew Barber said that thankfully it had not had the effect that was first feared but admitted that he could not ignore it. The South East allowance was increased to the maximum, but this did still not exceed the £5,000 offered by the Metropolitan police.

Councillor Brar asked about community policing and why the presence of officers in rural settings was practically non-existent. Matthew Barber said that there was rural crime task force, which was active in these areas. His desire was to see all local communities be adequately represented by officers.

The Chairman thanked all of the representatives from Thames valley Police for their presentation and their attendance.

### Street Lighting - Youth Council

The panel considered a written report on Street Lighting, which had been written by the Youth Council.

Holly Hannan, Chair of the Youth Council and Alexander Wood, Vice-Chair of the Youth Council began their presentation by giving a quick bit of background information about the Youth Council. It was established in August 2021 to represent all of the views of young persons between the ages of 14 and 19 who lived, attended education or were part of a youth organisation within the borough.

They then outlined the aims of the Youth Council as being the following:

- To represent the views and needs of all young people in the borough.
- To act as advisors to RBWM and liaise with the Council, businesses, and other organisations.
- To celebrate the achievements of young people in RBWM.
- To work on projects that were of interest to young people, to raise awareness of their views and interests

With regards to their street lighting report, they stated that in January 2022, a letter was written by the Youth Council to the Council as part of the 2022/23 budget consultation process. In February 2022, an invitation was extended to them to attend a meeting with Councillor Carroll, Councillor Hilton, and Kevin McDaniel, who wished to address some of the concerns that had been raised within the letter. Young person's safety was the main concern which came out of both the letter and also the meeting. The Youth Council were asked to produce a report on the condition of street lighting within RBWM, from the perspective of young persons. A working group that was led by Youth Councillor Caitie Holden compiled the report, which was meant to be presented to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Panel in September 2022, however the meeting was cancelled due to the passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

They then provided some facts about street lighting to the panel. 5 studies conducted within the UK revealed that 38 fewer crimes per 100 occurred when an area was well lit. In 2020, it was revealed also that Thames Valley ranked sixth on the list of the highest number of women that were killed by men. This reinforced the Youth Council's belief that street lighting was of paramount importance for the safety of not just young persons, but all residents within the borough. The death of Sarah Everard highlighted this issue in even greater detail.

The identified areas of concern by the Youth Council were very much more rural areas. These included as examples Burchetts Green, Clewer Avenue, Parsonage Lane, Clewer Fields, the Windsor Road and the Ascot Road. They pleaded for the Council to improve lighting in areas such as these to ensure that young people within RBWM felt safe and secure.

The Chair thanked Holly and Alexander for their presentation and opened the floor to questions from panel members.

Councillor Greg Jones said that when some street lights were damaged due to cars for example, the reason it could take so long for them to be fixed was due to the Council awaiting specialist parts and having to get the electricity board to attend and fix it. He also said that some people would object to street lighting put up in certain places as they may not want to increase light pollution in that area for example. He asked if this had been considered when writing the report. Alexander Wood replied by saying that they had considered it, hence why they wished to focus on rural areas, where this would not necessarily be such an issue. Councillor Walters thanked them for their report and their presentation and said that there was also another school of thought when it came to street lighting. He said that it could potentially have negative impacts on wildlife and the environment. He then provided them with a web address for them to visit. Oran Norris-Browne, Democratic Services Officer then provided them with this in writing to visit offline. He said that a lot of people did not like lots of artificial light as they were unable to see the stars at night for example. Higher lighting areas could also create black spots for criminals to hide in and commit further crimes too. He wished to just make them aware of these things.

Holly Hannan thanked him for his comments but asked what was more important, the environment or safety. She expressed concerns over young people walking to and from school in the dark and stated that anything could happen to them. She was a huge advocate for the environment however huge safety issues were on display.

Councillor Luxton thanked them for their presentation and said that it was a very important issue that they were bringing to the panel's attention. Several issues had recently occurred in her ward near to Charters School. She said that many areas near the schools in her ward were very poorly lit and that it needed to be addressed.

Councillor Hunt said that the presentation was very well put together and thanked them for bringing it before the panel. She said that Burchetts Green was partly in her ward, but also in Councillor Brar's ward too. With respect to the Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) she was unaware of any young persons walking to and from there due to its location. She was aware of many buses going to and from the location, but no people attending on foot, and questioned if the Youth Council knew anybody who did walk. They were unsure of anybody personally but knew that people did walk to and from and that the area was very poorly lit.

Councillor Davey said to the two Youth Councillors that they could suggest a motion to the panel, to move things forward and put in a plan of action at the meeting. Oran Norris-Browne said that he could advise them with regards to this at the appropriate time privately during the meeting.

Councillor Brar asked the officers if they possessed a list of locations of concern with regards to poor lighting, or were they rated in priority order. Andrew Durrant, Executive Director of Place Services said that it would be beneficial to address that question when he summed up at the end of the agenda item. The Chair agreed to this.

Councillor Del Campo said this topic was certainly one that could be looked at going forward and suggested a potential task and finish group as being a way forward.

Councillor Singh thanked all of the Youth Councillors for their work on the report. He said that he would like to have seen the responses from TVP if they were still at the meeting. He noted a number of areas within his ward which were crime hotspots and should be well lit, including where the new car park had been built. He asked if they had seen an increase in lights being broken or not switched on around the borough.

Holly Hannan replied by saying that she had seen lights out around the borough and said that they were clearly not being fixed. They wished for better intervention and a better way to report and keep a track of these things. They also admitted that they probably missed some areas, due to the lack of resources that were available to them.

Councillor Singh asked if the Youth Council had noticed an added sense of concern around the state of reflective beacons within the borough. The Chair and the Youth Councillors were not sure what was being referred to here.

Councillor Shelim said that lighting was very important for security in the borough. He said that his view was that issues in specific ward, needed to be chased up by the ward councillors specifically. They could then follow this up with officers in the most effective way.

The Chair then invited officers to summarise and give their professional advice on the matters.

Andrew Durrant thanked the Youth Councillors for their report and said that it was very important for the Councils as a whole to listen to young persons within the borough. He admitted that as with everything there were competing priorities, whether this be with the environment or economic aspects. He thanked them for pointing out specific locations that had been identified as a problem. Each location of course had different factors to consider, and each had to be handled differently to each other. He said that the Residents Survey would

potentially be a good avenue to pursue. Most persons in the borough did feel safe, however it was important to focus on the small percentage of people who did not.

Andrew Durrant said that it was important to also not hamper the engagement of young persons in extra curricular activities also, due to low amounts of street lighting. He recognised the comments that had been made about current street lights within the borough. He said that it was always helpful when these were reported and recognised that lights may not have been fixed as quickly as they should have in the past. He said that there was a lot of intelligence available between the Youth Council and the officers and said that they just needed to home in on what the issues were.

The Chair suggested a quick comfort break where Oran Norris-Browne could discuss with the Youth Council, their options that were available to them.

***The meeting was adjourned at 21:10***

***The meeting re-convened at 21:21***

It was discussed between the officers and the Youth Council representatives that they could not support a motion at the meeting as they did not want to speak on behalf of the Youth Council, without having consulted them first. Officers suggested that they look into the issues that had been raised at the meeting and invite the Youth Council back to a future meeting to inform them of the work that had been undertaken and any other information that they felt needed to be distributed. Several options could potentially be formulated between the officers and the Youth Council and put before the panel at a future meeting.

**AGREED: That the Youth Council be invited back to a future Place Overview & Scrutiny meeting.**

## WORK PROGRAMME

Oran Norris-Browne outlined to the panel what was currently scheduled in for the next meeting. 2 scoping documents were currently outstanding, one being on CIL and one being on the River Thames Scheme. The Chair asked the panel if the River Thames Scheme was to do with the route all the way to Staines, or if it was just within the borough as he was not too sure how a scoping document for part of the scheme would entirely work. He said that he would look into this offline.

With regards to the CIL scoping document, Oran Norris-Browne said that this had sat with a Councillor who was no longer on the panel, and therefore it needed to be re-assigned. He explained that it had first been created in May 2022 and had already appeared on the June 2022 agenda for officer comment, however since then it had somewhat stagnated. Councillor Singh agreed that he would work with Mark Beeley, Democratic Services Officer, and Statutory Scrutiny Officer to perfect it.

**AGREED: That Councillor Singh perfects the scoping document on CIL and brings it back to the panel.**

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 9.30 pm

Chair.....

Date.....