

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 12 April 2023

Present: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Helen Taylor (Vice-Chairman), Greg Jones, Gerry Clark, Shamsul Shelim, Leo Walters, Joshua Reynolds, Mandy Brar, Gurch Singh and Parish Councillor Pat McDonald

Present virtually: Councillor Sayonara Luxton

Also in attendance virtually: Councillor Phil Haseler

Officers: Mark Beeley and Alysse Strachan

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Davey and Councillor Hunt. Councillor Clark was attending the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Hunt.

It was noted that Councillor Luxton was attending the meeting virtually.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

Minutes

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meetings held on 25th January 2023 and 31st January 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Youth Council Results on Street Lighting Plan

Alysse Strachan, Head of Neighbourhood Services, provided an update on street lighting across the borough since the Panel considered the report from the Youth Council at the last meeting. They had raised concerns about road safety, personal safety and lighting levels. The report made reference to a number of areas where street lighting was considered a concern. Representatives from the Youth Council had attended the last Place Overview & Scrutiny Panel meeting to present the report and discussed their concerns with officers and the Panel. It was agreed that a further investigation and discussion on the matter was required and an update would be brought back to the Panel.

Alysse Strachan highlighted that there was no legal requirement for local authorities to provide street lighting. However, there was a duty to ensure that lighting units were kept in a safe condition. Currently, there were 14,351 LED lights across the borough and there were plans to upgrade the remaining 711 lights to LED standard. LED lights produced a white light and were lit to the standard presently used across the country in line with guidance from the Institute of Lighting Professionals British Standard. The new LED lighting was recognised to discourage crime and enabled residents to gain a sense of safety whilst facilitating orientation for all road users. The LED lights provided better clarity and perception, increased energy efficiency and were more cost effective. The street lighting inventory was maintained through a contract with FMJ Solutions, which ran until 2038. The contract included LED street lighting and other electrical street furniture assets.

RBWM had participated in the National Highways and Transport Survey for the last ten years. Residents answered questions to gauge satisfaction with a range of highway and transport subjects. In 2022, the survey was sent to 3,300 households with nearly 700 responses being received. Street lighting scored high for importance and fairly high as an area for investment. Survey responses indicated that provision was 'about the right amount'. Satisfaction scores for street lighting were in line with 2021 results and the national average. Considering responses by age group, 18-24 year olds in RBWM were less satisfied with street lighting than other age groups.

Alysse Strachan explained that officers had reviewed the specific locations listed in the report from the Youth Council and had offered further meetings with the Youth Council to discuss their concerns. Each location was different and had a specific set of considerations which needed to be taken into account alongside general considerations such as road safety and environmental impacts. Alysse Strachan highlighted a couple of specific examples, the full list of locations, maps and detail could be provided after the meeting. The following examples were discussed:

- Southlea Road, Datchet – the road had street lighting, however it was a low lit area and was lit in line with guidance from the Institute of Lighting Professionals British Standard. Not all of the road was lit to avoid urbanising the area.
- Brownfield Gardens to Ludlow Road, Maidenhead – the footpath was not adopted highway and as such RBWM was unable to control the street lighting. The lighting in this area was controlled by Housing Solutions.
- All footpath lighting had been upgraded to LED.

Alysse Strachan concluded the presentation by explaining that all street lighting across RBWM was installed in line with the British Standards. Since upgrading to LED, lights were on a dimming regime to promote energy conservation. Where lighting was considered desirable, then full consideration needed to be given to the environmental impact of any lighting design and full consultation with residents, Ward Councillors and Parish Councils would need to be carried out for specific locations. Additional street lighting or increased lighting levels might not be the correct or only solution to issues or concerns regarding road safety and personal security. It was recommended that officers continued to work with the Youth Council to look at options and put forward proposals.

Councillor Luxton said that it would be really useful for the map with the full list of proposed locations to be shared with the Panel. She had received a number of complaints recently in Sunninghill and Cheapside on street lighting.

Alysse Strachan clarified that there was no new street lighting being proposed, officers were currently upgrading all street lighting to the new LED bulbs. The list of locations were those already provided by the Youth Council.

Councillor Luxton asked what action would be taken on the areas of the borough which the Youth Council had highlighted as areas of concern.

The Chairman said that if there were areas which were a concern, they could be brought to the attention of officers and the relevant Ward Councillors.

Councillor G Jones asked why it took so long for a street light to be replaced once it had been reported as damaged. It could be a significant period of time, sometimes up to a year.

Alysse Strachan said that there had been some supply issues which had affected the time taken to replace faulty street lights, the council was working with suppliers to try and minimise the impact of issues. There were some examples where the council were reliant on SSE, as the power provider.

Councillor Reynolds asked for clarification that the council would not be taking action on any of the areas which had been highlighted by the Youth Council. It was important to see something tangible from the report which had been submitted. He asked if the street lighting in the area which was owned by Housing Solutions had been raised directly with the organisation.

Alysse Strachan said that it had not been raised but this was something that officers could do to see what the response was.

ACTION – Alysse Strachan to raise the issue of street lighting in Brownfield Gardens to Ludlow Road, Maidenhead, with Housing Solutions.

Councillor Reynolds agreed with the point raised by Councillor G Jones, it took a significant amount of time for issues reported to be resolved. He suggested that the issue was that the contract with FMJ Solutions ran until 2038 and this was something to be mindful of.

Councillor Singh asked how many street lights were currently not working across the borough.

Alysse Strachan said that less than 1% of the street lights were not working.

Councillor Singh asked if officers were looking at a solution to improve the timescales involved with replacing street lights. He suggested that the Panel could invite the utility providers to a future meeting.

Alysse Strachan said that 11 of the previously reported faults were due to SSE power issues, the council worked closely with SSE to replace faulty street lights. The contract was long term but there were key performance indicators that the contractors would need to meet to continue with the contract.

Councillor Singh asked if street lighting replacement was prioritised in certain areas. He used the example of the Grove Road car park which was in the centre of Maidenhead, some lights in this car park needed to be replaced and this had not been done for some time.

Alysse Strachan said that she would need to look at the Grove Road case after the meeting to explore what the issue was with the lighting in this car park. For response times, the standard response was two working days, emergency response was two hours, faults with power supply were up to 28 days. However, the council had seen significantly longer times than this from SSE.

Councillor Haseler, Cabinet Member for Planning, Parking, Highways and Transport, informed the Panel that he had recently written to the CEO of SSE because of the slow response times. Officers were having regular meetings with SSE and there had been an improvement seen. For 'stumped' street lights, there was a proposal in place for all of these to be replaced in the current financial year.

Councillor Taylor was surprised to hear during the presentation that there was no legal requirement on the council to provide street lighting. In her ward of Oldfield, the waterway provided a useful footpath for residents but the path was not lit. Councillor Taylor was concerned that there would be further developments across the borough where there were issues with lighting which could impact the safety of residents. She suggested that some research could be done to see if there were anymore 'blackspot' around the borough and consider how they could be approached.

Alysse Strachan said that she could work with the Planning team to see if there were any set rules or requirements for new developments to include street lighting.

ACTION – Alysse Strachan to see if there were any rules or regulations in place for new developments to consider street lighting.

Councillor Walters said that it was good to hear that Councillor Haseler had been successful in chasing up SSE to improve their timescales. It was also reassuring that most residents in the borough did feel safe.

Parish Councillor Pat McDonald asked if there were any penalties in place in the contract with FMJ Solutions, should the company not be performing to the level expected.

ACTION – Alysse Strachan to provide the key performance indicators on the contract with FMJ Solutions to the Panel.

Councillor Shelim suggested that officers should continue to communicate with the Youth Council going forward, it was important that they were involved.

Councillor Singh had received communication from residents that the lights were still on in the Broadway car park, which had been closed at the end of 2022 due to health and safety concerns.

Alysse Strachan confirmed that the lights in this car park had now been turned off.

Annual Scrutiny Report - Drafting Ideas

Mark Beeley, Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview and Scrutiny, explained that each year a report was produced which would go to Full Council and highlighted the work of scrutiny over the past municipal year. The Panel were asked if there were any comments or areas they would like to see included in the annual report.

The Chairman commented on the River Thames Scheme, this would be scoped and explored in the next municipal year.

ACTION – Item on River Thames Scheme to be added to the work programme.

Councillor Reynolds felt that one of the successes of the Panel had been the meeting considering the Place directorate budget items. It was a long meeting but had been productive and a lot of information had been explored and recommendations to Cabinet made. Next year, there could be an opportunity to include residents consultation feedback as part of the budget scrutiny process.

Councillor Taylor suggested that more work could be done in collaboration with the Youth Council, they did a good job with the street lighting project and it would be great to work with them in future.

Work Programme

The Panel noted the work programme for the next municipal year.

Councillor Walters asked if the new homes bonus scheme was still happening.

ACTION – Councillor Walter's question on the new homes bonus scheme to be passed on to the relevant officers to be answered after the meeting.

Councillor Singh asked whether the list of objectors to the lease of the site at Braywick Park to Maidenhead United FC could be provided.

Mark Beeley confirmed that he would chase this action up after the meeting in advance of the call in being considered.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to ask officers if the objections to the decision could be provided to the Panel.

Councillor Reynolds asked if the objectors would be directly notified that the call in meeting next week would be taking place.

Mark Beeley said that the objectors would not be notified directly but information regarding the meeting would be displayed on the Town Hall noticeboard and on the RBWM website. Any resident was welcome to attend the meeting or watch the meeting on YouTube.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 7.50 pm

Chair.....

Date.....