

PARISH CONFERENCE

THURSDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Christine Bateson (Co-Chairman), Parish Councillor Anne-Catherine Buxton (Co-Chairman), Ken Robertson (Eton Town Council), Bob Austen (Eton Town Council), Katy Jones (Datchet), Graham Pobjoy (Waltham St Lawrence), Stephen Hedges (Cox Green), Ian Harvey (Cox Green), Allen Corcoran (Datchet), Christine Doyle (Cookham), Martin Coker (Cookham), Mandy Robson Brown (Bisham), Des Warren (Shottesbrooke), David Burfitt (Hurley), Sandra Baker (Hurley), Barbara Story (Ascot & Sunninghill) and Ruth Davies (Sunningdale).

Officers: Andy Jeffs, Shilpa Manek, James Carpenter, Pablo Calvo, Salma Barakat and Louise Freeth

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The two Chairmen welcomed everyone to the Conference. Parish Councillor Anne-Catherine Buxton informed the Conference that with a new Leader and a new Managing Director, it was a good time to make new ways of working in moving forward.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brar and Johnson, Duncan Sharkey, Ken Elvin (Bray), Susan Cook (Bray) and Chris Graham (Bray).

MINUTES FROM LAST CONFERENCE

Resolved Unanimously: that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2019 be approved.

The Conference asked that the Berkshire Youth Service item be added to the next Conference agenda.

ACTION: Add Berkshire Youth Service item to the next Conference agenda.

UPDATE ON THE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

James Carpenter, Interim Head of Planning, informed the Conference of where we currently were with the Borough Local Plan (BLP).

James Carpenter informed the Conference that the Borough Local Plan had been submitted and then was paused for further work. This was now completed and the plan was out for consultation. James Carpenter encouraged everyone to comment, preferably online. The Conference were also informed that there would be sessions at the three major libraries to assist residents to respond to the consultation. All of the documentation was available at each Parish Council and in all the libraries. The deadline for comments was 15 December 2019.

ACTION: Share dates of sessions in the libraries for residents.

The proposed changes would be submitted to the inspector in 2020 and further hearings were anticipated over summer 2020. The BLP would be in place in 2021.

James Carpenter informed the Conference that both he and the Lead Member for Planning, Councillor Coppinger were very eager to meet with Parish Councillors and residents.

If any Parish Council wanted a visit from James Carpenter and Councillor Coppinger, they were encouraged to contact James Carpenter directly on james.carpenter@rbwm.gov.uk

Anne-Catherine Buxton asked about the Infrastructure Development Plan and whether it was going to be updated. James Carpenter would respond directly to her.

ACTION: James Carpenter to respond to Sunningdale Parish Council about the Infrastructure Development Plan.

James Carpenter informed the Conference that he was currently assisting with interviewing for the new Head of Planning and was expected to be at RBWM till April 2020.

SCENE SETTING FOR NEXT YEARS BUDGET

Peter Robinson, CIPFA Associate, gave the Conference a short presentation (attached) on the work of CIPFA in RBWM. Peter Robinson gave some background on the financial governance review that took place in the summer and the recommendations from that review, which were presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 22 October 2019. The recommendations were as follows:

- A detailed review of the way financial management operates within the Royal Borough was undertaken as a matter of urgency.
- The Council put in place measures that ensured that they comply with all applicable local government financial legislation, regulations and codes of practice.
- A fundamental review of the financial resilience of the Council is undertaken that included both the medium term financial plan and the capital programme.
- The capital programme was reviewed to ensure all schemes have appropriate and robust business cases, have clear delivery outcomes and that risks were appropriately managed.
- The role and support to the current s151 Officer was reviewed.

Peter Robinson continued to inform the Conference that CIPFA would assist RBWM to improve their documentation and processes in place, openness and transparency, financial resilience and pressures on local government. Local authorities had lost a lot of money as a result of many cuts and have had to manage many reductions. RBWM had one of the lowest council taxes in the country and that also has had an impact on the council. This would increase but was capped at four percent. The gap would need to be filled within the next three to four years. The levels of resources had been at minimum levels. The budget was currently being worked on, the plan was that the budget would be presented at overview and scrutiny panels in late January 2020 and early February 2020. It would be presented to Cabinet on 6th February 2020 and to Council on 25th February 2020. The budget would include the revenue budget 2020/21, capital programme 2020/21 – 2022/23, treasury management strategy and the fees and changes.

Peter Robinson informed the Conference that there would be no proposal to change the Parish Equalisation Grant in 2020/2021. The Parish precept letter is due to be sent 22 November 2019 and the deadline for the completion of this form was 17 January 2020. Peter Robinson informed the Conference, in relation to a question asked by the Conference, that it was ok to submit a provisional figure by the 17 January 2020 and then the final figure as soon after that as possible.

The Co Chairman, Anne-Catherine Buxton asked if there were going to be any major cuts that the Parishes needed to be aware of before setting their precepts. She asked if the borough

would be having any budget assumption meetings. Peter Robinson informed the Conference that he would speak to the MD and there was a Budget Steering Group next week.

ACTION: Peter Robinson would inform the Conference by email.

ENCOURAGING PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES NOT TO USE SINGLE USE PLASTICS WHERE POSSIBLE AND PARTICULARLY PLASTIC BOTTLES

Paul Hinton, Community Lead for Plastic Free Windsor, gave a verbal presentation to the Conference and handed some leaflets out. Paul Hinton informed the Conference that this was a 'Campaign in a box'. This was giving communities the opportunity to become plastic free by following the five objectives set. Once these five objectives had been completed, accreditation would be awarded and then regular steering group meetings would continue the work. The five objectives were as follows:

- The council would need to approve a motion to support the campaign.
- To give up three or more items of single use plastics, 23 businesses on board.
- To organise events/fundraisers.
- To work with community organisations.
- To nominate members to the Campaign Steering Group, RBWM have nominated Councillors Stimson, Rayner and Jones,

Other ideas that the group had included; water stations/refills in the borough, a number of businesses were happy to be part of the scheme.

Paul Hinton asked if the Parish Councils wanted to be part of the campaign. If so, they were asked to contact Paul Hinton directly on the details on the leaflet provided.

PRESENTATION ON BIODIVERSITY

Councillor Donna Stimson gave a presentation to the Conference on the Climate emergency: biodiversity – verges and open spaces.

The points that Councillor Stimson covered included:

- What biodiversity was and why it mattered.
- The background of diversity and where we were now.
- The three urban opportunity areas in RBWM.
- The focus was on verges, open spaces and barren/neglected areas.
- How our verges were being managed.
- The benefits of wild flowers.
- The benefits of our first biodiversity programme.
- References.

Stephen Hedges, Cox Green clerk asked about the carbon footprint and it increasing whilst the cuttings were being taken away and asked if they could not just be left there. Councillor Stimson informed the Conference that it depended on the type of wildflower. Councillor Stimson would look into this further but was fairly sure that the cuttings had to be removed.

Wraysbury Parish Council raised the point of all climate change issues being joined up and efforts not being made in isolation. The example that was given was reducing plastic would mean using more paper and that would mean more trees being cut down and also allowing biodiversity at verges would be destroyed due to parking issues.

LIBRARY ONLINE RESOURCES

Salma Barakat, Digital Support Officer and Pablo Calvo, Digital Delivery Officer, informed the Conference of the number of resources that were available to residents in the library. These were all free to members of the library. There were a wide range of devices that these could be used on via the website, using the app, on Apple and on Kindle Fire. There were ebooks, 147 magazines, back and current issues, digital newspapers from the UK and around the world.

A leaflet was handed out along with contact details for both Salma and Pablo.

PARISH CHARTER REVIEW

Andy Jeffs, Executive Director, informed the Conference that no comments had been received which indicated that all were happy with the current Parish Charter. The review date would now be changed to 31/08/2020.

UPDATE ON CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Councillor Donna Stimson gave a short presentation to the Conference. Councillor Stimson informed the Conference that six climate change workshops were going to be taking place, one had already happened. An email had been sent to all Parishes but there had been a mix up. The workshops would be made up of councillors, cross parties and experienced officers, enthusiasts and members of the parish councils as these were the closest to their residents. The workshop would be working towards a vision and three actable tasks to reach the vision.

FUTURE LIAISON FOR PARISH COUNCILS

Andy Jeffs was thanked for all his hard work with the Parish Councils. Andy would be leaving RBWM on 6 December 2019. The future contact for Parish Councils would be Louise Freeth; louise.freeth@rbwm.gov.uk

ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Any items for future meetings should be emailed to Sandra Baker or Shilpa Manek.

DATE OF NEXT CONFERENCE

The date of the next meeting will be confirmed.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 9.00 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....