

## COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 8 MARCH 2021

PRESENT: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Greg Jones (Vice-Chairman), Gurpreet Bhangra, Helen Price, Del Campo and Lenton

Also in attendance: Councillors Clive Baskerville, Samantha Rayner, Donna Stimson, David Hilton, David Cannon, John Baldwin, Christine Bateson, Mandy Brar, Gerry Clark, Shamsul Shelim and Simon Werner

Officers: Hilary Hall, Steph James, Shilpa Manek and David Scott

### WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and read out the virtual meeting note.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor Pat MacDonald.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bhangra declared a personal interest as Norden Farm was in his ward and he had donated some funds in December 2020.

Councillor Bowden declared a personal interest as he was the appointed trustee on behalf of the borough for The Old Court.

### CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU - UPDATE

Hilary Hall, Director of Adults, Health and Commissioning, introduced the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) item and Bill Feeney, Interim CEO of CAB Maidenhead.

Bill Feeney gave a presentation to the Panel. (Presentation attached).

Councillor Bowden asked what the provision was for residents in Windsor, Datchet and the southern parts of the borough and was informed by Bill Feeney that anyone from the local authority could ask for advice and support. There was currently a big technical change taking place nationally called Single Queue. This would enable everyone to join a single queue so that if your local CAB could not answer, then another team would respond to offer support. Councillor Bowden asked if there was a premise in Windsor where face to face meeting could take place and was informed that currently no actual meetings were taking place. Once lockdown had lifted, outreach facilities would reopen. This service was offered at a GP surgery in Dedworth, Windsor library and a home service.

Councillor Price asked what the current waiting list was and was this continuing to increase? Bill Feeney responded that CAB were dealing with all enquiries at present with no backlog. There was a plan to open the offices in a Covid safe way but currently they were also dealing with the merge with Bracknell CAB.

Councillor Price asked if many of the services offered by CAB were to other organisations such as RBWM, Relate, Job Centre, Shelter and many more. Did CAB find that they were mainly sighposting? Bill Feeney informed the Panel that there were some in-house experts. The

volunteers had vast amount of knowledge and many volunteers had been with CAB for over thirty years.

Councillor Price asked about the funding and where it came from. Bill Feeney informed the Panel that the funding had stopped CAB from expanding. Funding had been received from the borough as a grant and from other organisations such as NHS and DWP. CAB had also received smaller grants for other projects. CAB had lost many volunteers in the first lockdown. CAB were currently recruiting, and all raining was carried out online.

Councillor Del Campo Thanked Bill Feeney and the CAB team and asked four questions on how CAB had seen ages because of Covid 19. Councillor Del campo asked what were the current risks that CAB faced. Bill Feeney responded that the biggest risk at present was the merger and there were currently a lot of change management programs underway. The understanding of the service implementation plan and which parts of two different offices could be brought together quickly so that more people could be reached. Another risk was what the baseline service delivery would look like as of 1<sup>st</sup> April. The calls and emails were coming in thick and fast and there were not enough resources to work full time.

Councillor Del campo was interested in seeing the numbers of cases that had been dealt with and the breakdown compared to the year before. This could be discussed offline. It would be interesting to see the impact of Covid 19 and finally apart from the obvious of taking services online, what were the differences that a resident might notice compared to a few years ago.

Councillor G Jones asked about the government ending the suspension to eviction at some point, what would the implications be? Bill Feeney was not aware of the date, but it was very similar to the furlough scheme. Whilst these schemes were great to have in the short term, they continued to add pressure and then when the schemes were not extended, the evictions would be live, and people would need to have plans in place. There had been an increase in people asking the questions of what they should do and how quickly, which cannot be answered. Clarity from government was required soon. Councillor G Jones asked if there were any things that had been learnt during lockdown that would now be used going forward? Bill Feeney responded that being able to support many volunteers remotely, finding out their biggest concerns and what tools could be provided to assist.

Councillor Bhangra thanked Bill Feeney and his team. Councillor Bhangra asked about the upsurge and demand on services since the pandemic and also what was the single biggest issue that the CAB had had to deal with. Bill Feeney responded that there had absolutely been an upsurge in demand and with the changes of closing the offices and still continuing to offer the services, it was a difficult time. Some of the biggest issues that had increased were information on universal credit, benefits, tax credits and also housing.

Councillor Hilton commented that he was more familiar with Bracknell CAB and had known of an exceptional invaluable pilot that had been run with having a volunteer at a GP surgery to deal with non-medical issues. This had stopped during lockdown but Councillor Hilton had hoped that this would be an offering with the new merged CAB that would be of great value. Bill Feeney confirmed that both Bracknell and Maidenhead, both had outreach facilities that would restart as soon as lockdown was lifted.

Councillor Rayner thanked Bill Feeney for the presentation and commented that she really appreciated the work of CAB in assisting residents. Councillor Rayner asked if CAB had found that their clients were suffering from long Covid and was this something that CAB would have to consider going forward? Bill Feeney commented that he would have to look into that and report back to Councillor Rayner.

The Chairman thanked Bill Feeney.

NORDEN FARM - UPDATE

Steph James, Maidenhead Town Centre Manager, introduced the report and Jane Corry, CE and Artistic Director at Norden Farm who will update the panel on the activities at Norden Farm and the AGM that took place in December 2020.

Jane Corry, Martin Kay (Chairman of NF Board), John Seymour (Chair of Finance Committee) and Ray Bauer (Financial Controller).

Martin Kay thanked the borough for their continual support and handed back to Jane Corry to go through the presentation. (Presentation attached).

Councillor Price commented that she was very impressed with all the engagement and looking after the disadvantaged children and all the social media activities, the coverage had been excellent. Councillor Price asked for clarification on the £50K that had been put aside for art organisations to bid for, in order to develop further funding streams. Martin Kay informed the Panel that of the £50K, £16k had been earmarked for Norden Farm and that had been included in the £80 that was projected as the total council support for next year.

Councillor G Jones asked John Seymour a question about the business interruption policy and that there may be potential for some pay-out. Councillor Jones asked for more information about this, how much had been applied for and what were the chances of receiving it. John Seymour advised the Panel that a number of claims had been put in ranging from £18K to £80K. Norden Farm felt that most of the applications would be invalidated as they had received the CRF grant.

Councillor Rayner gave more detail to the Panel about the £50K. This was in the growth bid in the budget for 2021-2022. It was an ongoing £50K which had been earmarked in the budget for the borough. Organisations such as Norden Farm and The Old Court can then bid for monies from other funders such as the Arts Council, charities and trusts if they are supported by the borough.

Councillor Del Campo asked that when the council funding eventually stops, what will be the biggest impact for residents? Martin Kay commented that they would like to continue the discounted rates for residents as this was part of the ethos of the arts centre, to help the community group. Jane Corry continued that when the funding disappeared completely, Norden Farm would be a very different place. It would only be open to the public for half a week so that would immediately impact the community groups. In that time, Norden Farm would need to look for new business. Jane Corry continued and said that they were very determined, had an amazing board, brilliant business brains, a really strong management team and a very loyal supporter base.

Councillor Bhangra thanked everyone at Norden Farm. Councillor Bhangra asked if there was any grant funding that they were still waiting to hear from as the government had recently announced further support for arts and culture. Norden Farm had filed an application for CR1, CR2 and would be applying for CR3. Jane Corry had been completing at least two applications a day and earlier on, she was successful in getting the grants but that was decreasing.

Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance, commented that it had been an interesting year, but the council had come through with putting three million pounds into reserve. This reserve would be used towards filling the black hole of £9.25 million that had been created by Covid 19. This was a result of lost income in car parking and leisure centres. Councillor Hilton informed the Panel that money had been put aside for grants and Councillor Rayner and Chris Joyce were working with the organisations to turn £50K into £100K.

## THE OLD COURT PROGRESS REPORT

Steph James introduced The Old Court item and handed over to Martin Denny, MD of The Old Court. The report would be providing an update on activity since November 2020.

Martin Denny gave a presentation to the Panel. (Presentation attached)

The Chairman thanked The Old Court for working with the East Berkshire College to carry out the testing at The Old Court in order to restart the college. The Chairman also commented that a local brewery that supplied The Old Court was also suffering as a result of Covid 19.

Councillor Del Campo asked what the impact would be of not receiving the grant funding from the borough. Martin Denny informed the Panel that the income would need to be found from other sources. The balance of the provision at The Old Court and its focus would shift to see more targeting of the bar as an income generator for The Old Court as well as tapping into more of a corporate and meetings market. Discussions were also taking place with the critical friends and Chris Joyce about The Old Court becoming a meeting space in Windsor for the borough. This would also give credibility to local companies. Martin Denny commented on the match funding ambition and the future of trusts, foundations and the arts council and it being very difficult to have any idea of whether that would work. Martin Denny suggested that they may be able to support more of the maintenance repair and structural overheads that were incurred as they were in a listed building by accessing heritage funds.

Councillor Rayner thanked Martin Denny. The Arts organisations had really adapted in these times and the borough and critical friends would work closely with them.

### Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

David Scott introduced the item and went through the report. David Scott commented that he had spoken with the local commander about the crime figures as UK stats caused concerns. The LPA commander had done some additional work which gave a rolling figure for twelve months. These showed that the headline figure was down, although the violent crime figures were up because of the increase in the level of harassment recording and reporting. David Scott asked the Panel how they would like the stats reported. David Scott was aware that the lack of commentary and that they were drawn from a national website was not very appropriate.

The Chairman informed the Panel that Thames Valley would not have the crime figures for the wealthier parts of the borough as these were not recorded in the national crime figures. The Chairman advised that the crime figures were also presented to the town forums. The Chairman said that the format of the figures should be discussed at a future meeting.

Councillor Del Campo asked for information on the number of projects to do with transformation, that had already been implemented, could more detail of these projects be sent to the Councillor Del Campo.

**ACTION: Provide more detail on transformation projects.**

Councillor Del Campo also asked when the Panel would see the delivery plan mentioned on page 5 for the environmental climate strategy.

**ACTION: Provide timeline for delivery plan.**

Councillor Del Campo commented that it was interesting to see that the Cox Green leisure centre attendances had stayed high. It would be interesting to understand why and learn from it. David Scott commented that the Cox Green leisure centre was smaller so had less impact, but it had been noticed that people were staying local.

Councillor Price asked about the revised priorities and the economic downturn and information on jobs, what was being done to help people find jobs, where would this be reported? Councillor Price commented on the accuracy of the Covid directory and how useful this would be if it was not accurate. Councillor Price suggested that the Covid directory should be circulated to all Ward councillors for them to update the entries that would be more accurate.

**ACTON: David Scott to provide this suggestion to the team.**

Councillor Price asked how the litter bins in the parks were measured and how often they were emptied. David Scott informed the Panel that was one of the five strands that made up the Tivoli contract performance indicator. The overflowing of the bins was being looked at and discussed with Tivoli. There had been steady progress with the contract.

Steph James informed the Panel that there was a strand of work ongoing as part of the recovery strategy to ensure that very clear information was available on the website in terms of jobs and employment. Steph James suggested reporting this at a future meeting.

**ACTION: Add to work programme**

Councillor G Jones asked a question about lateral flow testing and having one to visit a care home. When trying to arrange from RBWM website, it asks for a company name before takes you to next screen, this may need to be looked at. Maybe needs to be updated to say you can have this to visit a care home and the company information request needed to be taken out.

**ACTION: David Scott to look into this and amend**

COVID UPDATE

David Scott gave a brief update on Covid 19. The overall cases for 100000 was at a figure of 61.4 and coming down. The very latest date had dropped further to 40.9 per 100000. This showed a continued positive direction of travel. However, all efforts needed to be continued to drive the figures down further. The pressure on the hospitals and the NHS, as a whole were improving but ITU were still operating over capacity, particularly at Wexham Park Hospital. David Scott reported that the next phase was on community collect, this was an opportunity for people to book tests and collect them to be able to do at home.

WORK PROGRAMME

The clerk went through the work programme and informed the Panel that the Library Lead had suggested that the Library Transformation Strategy be added to the June meeting.

Councillor Del Campo asked if SportsAble could be reported on. Councillor Del Campo asked for an update on the annual report. The clerk informed the Panel that a Teams meeting would be arranged with all Panel members to discuss the annual report.

**ACTION: Add SportsAble/Provision for disabled sports to a future agenda**

The Chairman thanked David Scott for the information on when the SportsAble announcement was made.

Councillor Price reminded the Panel that The Old Court and Norden Farm needed to be added to a future meeting.

**ACTION: Add The Old Court and Norden Farm to the work programme for a future meeting**

The meeting, which began at 6.15 pm, finished at 8.21 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....