

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

TUESDAY, 11 JANUARY 2022

PRESENT: Councillors David Coppinger (Chairman), Helen Taylor (Vice-Chairman), Gurpreet Bhangra, Ross McWilliams, Clive Baskerville, Chris Targowski, John Baldwin, Greg Jones, Gerry Clark and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance: Councillor Catherine del Campo, Councillor Donna Stimson, Councillor Phil Haseler and Councillor Mandy Brar

Officers: Shilpa Manek and Adrien Waite

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: that the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 were a true and accurate record.**

### PRESENTATION ON THE PLANNING PROCESS

Adrien Waite, Head of Planning, gave a presentation to the Forum. The presentation was aimed at anyone wanting to understand the planning process. The presentation would cover what planning was, planning policy, development management, conservation and trees and enforcement.

The presentation was attached.

Councillor Baldwin commented that one of the emphasis was to encourage residents to get involved, Councillor Baldwin asked why the council had refused a neighbourhood plan for Maidenhead. Many residents were upset with the decision as one of the reasons was that the area was too big, which was subjective. How was too big measured and what was it compared to, for it to be too big?

The Head of Planning commented that the original application was submitted over two years ago and this was the only application that had been received for a designation of an area for a neighbourhood plan for Maidenhead and for the approval of the Forum. The formal application was refused for the area but also the forum did not meet the relevant tests. The detail of the decision was a published decision of the local authority. The more recent story that had been reported had not been a formal decision and had not followed a formal application for a neighbourhood forum but had been advice provided by an officer that had been to do with the size of the area that had been proposed for designation. It was felt that the area was too large. Neighbourhood Forum designations were supposed to represent what logical neighbourhood areas, which were of a certain size, not always of a certain size and the proposed area for the Maidenhead neighbourhood forum, which was a very large area.

Councillor Baldwin asked about the cost of the borough local plan and the last estimate had been that it had exceeded £2 million. Residents questioned if the decisions and the processes

were fair and they didn't seem to be fair. Residents were able to make representation at planning meetings and the Panel would be open minded and would make deliberations based on the evidence before them. Many residents believed that the decisions made were predetermined before the meetings took place. These were of a serious nature and had prompted a memo from the chief executive. Councillor Baldwin asked the Head of Planning if he could give residents the reassurances that RBWM had a genuine quasi-judicial and magisterial planning process and not one that was dominated by an existing administration policy.

The Head of Planning was aware of the letter from the chief executive which was seeking to remind members of the way that planning matters should be considered and the key thing that was being highlighted was the importance of making decisions that were fair and having regard to the development plan and matters not getting overly involved in local matters that may not be related to planning. In terms of the fairness of the planning system, it was a system where residents and other stakeholders would always have different views on the system based on their own experiences and based on some extent the outcomes they desire and whether those were outcomes that they got in terms of the way that local planning authority processed things, the Head of Planning reassured all that all comments were considered by planning professionals with only the boroughs interests in mind. The Head of Planning explained the process of the development management meetings and the training that was undertaken by all Panel Members.

Councillor Taylor asked how residents were informed about planning applications near them, especially if they were not online. What should residents look out for? The Head of Planning informed all that the precise consultation requirements differed for different types of applications. For the majority of planning applications, the borough would notify residents by writing to the owners or occupiers of the adjacent properties, in some circumstances, a site notice would be posted, if officers felt it was difficult to identify the interested parties or if the site was within a conservation area or affecting a listed building. On larger applications and heritage assets such as listed buildings or conservation areas, there would be a statutory notice published in a local newspaper advising residents of the application and how to comment on the application. There was also the planning register online that people could access, and alerts could be set up here too.

Councillor Greg Jones asked a question from a resident that when artist impressions were shown on an application, it showed plenty of trees and benches and then when the project was complete, these were not there. How accurate did the artist impressions need to be? And what level of importance was given to planting and vegetation around the new developments? The Head of Planning explained that the artists impressions should be giving a good idea of what the building would look like but these were not the actual drawings so there was always possibility of a degree of difference. The diagrams were there to give an idea only. The authority did put quite a degree of importance on making sure there was adequate landscaping and that developments were well thought out in terms of public realm. It was worth noting that sometimes, it would take time for a development to come to fruition and look like the artist had presented. Councillor Jones asked about green roofs and how these could be encouraged. Adrien Waite commented that green roofs were definitely encouraged as the sustainability and climate change strategy went forward. Many of the new developments did have these in the plans but they were not seen from ground level.

Resident, Derek Wilson, commented that with respect to the neighbourhood plan, there had been changes to the government legislation concerning these and it had been suggested that the area needed to be a smaller designated area to previously suggested. Derek Wilson also informed all that it was very important that the borough local plan be approved soon as currently, it was still the adopted plan of 1999 with the amendment of 2003. It was important for all to know that if decisions went against RBWM and were subject to appeal, RBWM were vulnerable at the appeal process even though the local plan was progressing through the inspection. Derek Wilson confirmed that the decisions were fair and were done in

a proper quasi-judicial manner. Derek Wilson asked at what stage was the borough local plan. The Head of Planning commented that it was at a fact-finding stage.

Councillor McWilliams asked about the importance that residents placed on design and particularly elevation within the town centre, Councillor McWilliams asked about a design code for Maidenhead town centre and whether this was considered. The Head of Planning commented that design was a very important part of the planning process, which was emphasized through many of the policies and also through the updated national policy. A lot of Maidenhead town centre was covered by conservation areas and therefore any decisions had to be considered keeping those in mind and consulting with the conservation team in the development management process.

## MAIDENHEAD FIRE BRIGADE UPDATE

Robin Jordan, Station Manager at Whitewatch at Maidenhead Fire Station, explained that he had been asked to give a brief explanation of the role in the fire station. Robin Jordan would give examples of what they did in the community. One of the strategic commitments was to provide education and advice on how they prevented fires and other emergencies. Community groups within the town were visited and a safe and well visit would be conducted. This affected everyone and was based around good housekeeping and to ensure that all had a smoke detector and carried out routine tasks and not take them for granted. So, the first thing checked was that there was a working smoke alarm and that it was in the correct position. Advice would be given on the main areas of the house, these included:

### **Kitchen**

- Putting shopping on a hob;
- Putting things in the microwave that shouldn't be put in there;
- Toasters;
- Fat on trays;
- Keeping loose clothing out of the way;
- Tie hair up;
- Advice- if you don't like the look of a fire, switch off power source and shut the door and contact Fire Service.
- Regularly service boilers to prevent carbon monoxide build up;
- To have a carbon monoxide detector in the house, near to a boiler;

### **Living Room**

- Keep chimneys clean and have a carbon monoxide detector in living room;
- Electrical sockets, try to use long extension cables and wires unwind properly;
- Candles, extinguish when leaving the room and have fire guards around fire places.

### **Bedroom**

- Unravel electric blanket wires and switch off before sleeping.

The location of the smoke detectors was then checked, ideally these should be in the hallways at the bottom and top of stairs. The routine that should be followed before bedtime, should be turn off telly and shut the door after them. It's good to know where the keys are. All doors should be shut as this would give thirty minute of fire protection. It was good to have a phone and a torch upstairs and clear clutter from the main exit routes.

Councillor Singh asked if the fire service still carried out fire risk assessments and was advised the fire risk assessments were carried out for businesses by a specific team. Councillor Singh asked if the fire service were still offering the apprentice scheme in Maidenhead and was informed that the first batch of students were currently at training school. This was a new recruitment drive that was government driven and new to the fire service. Councillor Singh continued and asked about how high could the fires be tackled by the Maidenhead team, especially with the buildings getting taller in the town centre. Robin Jordan informed the Forum that they had an aerial ladder platform that reached 40 metres but not specifically in Maidenhead, it was in the county. The ladders on the appliances reached 13.5

meters. In recent times, the procedures had been changed to that ensure that a level two officer of the control team would attend any high-rise building. There was also a built environment team who were working constantly within the centre of the county. They would be working on ensuring that an information plate be put in a simple form outside the high-rise buildings to explain the main points about the building to the officer on arrival in an incident. This would include entry's, exits, where the high rise were, where the dry riser inlets were and where the lifts were located. All of these actions had come out of the Grenfell Tower incident.

Councillor Singh asked with Maidenhead increasing its number of flats and therefore population, was there any thoughts of moving the station premises to a larger premise or having more appliances. Robin Jordan informed the Forum that there were plans to develop the station, adapt the station in case of a larger incident. The station currently consisted of a satellite system that covered Windsor and there were many special appliances as the river was also covered by Maidenhead Station.

Councillor Coppinger asked a question from the chat, as follows, as a fire authority, would Robin Jordan and his team have a say on how tall a building should be. Robin Jordan commented that they did not have a say, it was determined by planning.

The Chairman thanked Robin Jordan for taking the time out to attend and for all their hard work in protecting the borough and for a very useful presentation.

### WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD CYCLING ACTION GROUP

Resident, Derek Wilson, chair of Windsor and Maidenhead Cycling Action Group, which also included Ascot and the Sunning's.

Derek Wilson informed the Forum what the Windsor and Maidenhead Cycling Action Group was and what their Mission Statement was and what work they were doing towards it. The Group's Objectives were stated. The Group had met regularly over the last nine months over Zoom and had been working on the RBWM local cycle and cycling and walking infrastructure plan. There had been a number of presentations across the borough to get local feedback on what was required in planning cycle routes and to see if the best possible service was being provided to the residents. The plan was being developed by Tim Golabek and the Project Centre staff.

Another item discussed had been the concern about the PSPO's that had been implemented in the pedestrian areas of Windsor and Maidenhead town centres and requested a potential meeting with Councillor Clark and Tim Golabek to go through a number of areas of concern to see if any of the concerns could be reinvested.

The Group would like to be more informed and have better two-way communication.

The Windsor Cycle Hub had been launched in the last nine months. A Maidenhead Cycle Hub had also recently been launched.

There was still an issue of bicycles been stolen from around the town centre. Derek Wilson informed the Forum that a informative presentation had been given by Jefferey Pick, the Police Community Engagement and Resilience Officer for Thames Valley Police, who had advised on bike marking sessions.

Derek Wilson asked for more information on which active travel measures had been removed.

Councillor Clark commented that the engagement had been great between the Action Group and the borough. Tim Golabek and Chris Joyce had been in constant communication with all matters to cycling and it had been rising up the agenda. The borough had been very supportive in the Action Group and Active Travel. Councillor Clark would be very happy to have a meeting very soon.

Councillor Clark informed the Forum that the tranche one measures where monies were supplied to facilitate social distancing and transport for workers and to try and keep the covid infections risk down. This work was still ongoing.

Councillor Taylor asked about the proposed map of cycle paths around the borough to try and encourage residents off the roads and give residents greater knowledge of where the cycle paths were located, and which paths were suitable for families with young children. Councillor Taylor asked if there had been any progress on this. Derek Wilson informed the Forum that there used to be a cycle path plan provided by the borough but currently there was one within the cycling action plan. This could be looked into further.

Councillor Singh asked to be invited to the meeting with Councillor Clark and Tim Golabek. Residents had been concerned about the PSPO's and the fines they were giving out. Also cycle theft was also a big problem. The issues raised could also be discussed at the meeting.

Robyn Bunyan, Maidenhead Town Manager, had provided a report for the Forum. Councillor McWilliams asked about the new lounge that was opening in the town centre and asked what the opening plans were. Robyn Bunyan informed the Forum that it would be opening the following week and once she had further details on the opening, she would inform all.

There was slow positive progress in the footfall in Maidenhead.

### ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

The following items were suggested by Forum Members:

- Councillor Taylor suggested an update on the celebrations for the Jubilee at the next meeting.
- Councillor G Jones suggested information on parking at Maidenhead train station and no parking for pick up and drop off.
- Councillor Singh suggested a discussion about turning Bridge Street into a food quarter, making it one way and having seating.
- Councillor Baldwin suggested a regular item on the agenda to discuss consultations.

The clerk informed the Forum that every effort was made in informing residents about ongoing consultations through the Members Update, Residents Newsletter and by Democratic Services sending an email to all resident forums and groups.

- Robyn Bunyan suggested a verbal update on events taking place in Maidenhead.

### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the date of the next meeting was Thursday 17 March 2022.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.20 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....