

DISABILITY AND INCLUSION FORUM

MONDAY, 14 MARCH 2022

PRESENT: Angela Clark (Chairman), Lisa Hughes (Vice-Chairman), Sharon Bunce, Sharon Carrigan, Tim Clare, Peter Haley, Dominic Manley, Councillor John Bowden and Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra

Also in attendance: Councillor Simon Bond, Councillor Catherine del Campo, Councillor Maureen Hunt, Councillor Samantha Rayner, Councillor Gurch Singh and Councillor Amy Tisi

Officers: Tim Golabek, Chris Wheeler, Becky Hatch, Lynne Lidster, Kelly Nash, Rachel Kinniburgh and David Cook.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and after reading the Chairman's notes, invited all present to introduce themselves.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Robin Pemberton.

MINUTES FROM THE LAST FORUM AND ACTIONS MONITORING

Resolved unanimously: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021 were approved.

SAFE PEDESTRIAN UNCONTROLLED CROSSINGS

Lisa Hughes introduced the item by informing of some of the difficulties people with disabilities have traveling around the Royal Borough. She informed that 83% of working age adults in the UK held a driving licence, however it was only 55% for those with a disability. People with disabilities need to rely far more on public transport and walking/wheeling.

The Forum were informed by Lisa Hughes that there was very little public transport within the Royal Borough, especially with limited bus services out the parishes. The state of the pavements, particularly the lack of dropped kerbs and street clutter made it very difficult and sometimes impossible for PwD to get to where they needed, even in town centres.

Lisa Hughes also raised concern about some of the language used by some RBWM officers in their emails which showed a lack of understanding. She gave the example of an engineer referring to some crossings having some disability access and describing dropped kerbs as being an enhanced feature. This lack of understanding was a concern to the Forum.

Lisa Hughes said that there was a need to upskill officers, especially having an understanding of the legislation. She made reference to Government legislation on dropped curbs where there should be a tolerance of 6mm for a dropped curb, yet this was not always followed in the Royal Borough. She informed that there were some with heights of 18mm and although this did not sound a lot she demonstrated the height difference by stacking pound coins. Lisa recommended that the Council's outdated SPD be replaced with an updated fit for purpose version and that the 'Report It' section of the RBWM website be improved to allow reporting of dropped kerbs that were not fit for purpose.

Tim Golabek, Service Lead for Transport and Infrastructure, informed the Forum that RBWM had adopted a kerb action plan in 2019, this was currently being updated. The future road map was getting active travel imbedded into the network, this could be short distance walking or long-distance cycling and linking to bus services. During the summer of 2021 there was consultation on cycling and walking and there was significant investment put into the budget build.

With regards to the issues raised Tim Golabek informed that when there was a concern reported the issues is inspected to determine the size of the problem so a correct resolution could be put in place based on safety for all users. The report it function is reviewed to make sure issues can be reported and that they are sent to the appropriate team to action. He apologised that there had been some past issues with some officers, all undertook disability training and he would review this. He also mentioned that one solution may not suit all users and thus there may need to be a compromise and further engagement.

Lisa Hughes asked for clarification on what was meant by one solution may not fit all and was informed that dropped kerbs with having tactile paving may suit some but could hinder others. Lisa replied that there was a Dept for Transport specification for uncontrolled crossing which required both kerbs flush to the road surface and tactile paving. It also specified maximum gradients and crossfalls. She gave an example of a new dropped kerb at the end of St Ives Road that was not compliant.

Cllr Rayner mentioned that with regards to the SPD there would be a number of reports coming to Cabinet to remove old SPD and introduce new ones.

Cllr Singh mentioned the height of the curbs outside the Town Hall were very high, he was informed that officers could not talk about individual schemes but he would look into this. Cllr Singh also complained about the quality of the sound for those wating the meeting online, Cllr Rayner informed that officers were aware of the issues with sound quality for meetings being held at the Town Hall Council Chamber and a solution was being put in place.

Cllr Bowden informed that he would discuss the issues raised with the appropriate Lead Member. With regards to pavement clutter he mentioned how he tried to get a pedestrian crossing installed in Eton High Street but he had been informed that this was not possible due to current infrastructure. There were also new electric charging points being installed that could add further issues for lowering pavements.

Lisa Hughes reiterated that although there was a section on the RBWM website for reporting issues with pavements there was not an option for reporting issues with dropped kerbs.

Cllr Tisi mentioned that even were there was a dropped kerb in some areas there was a lot of clutter outside shops and restaurants that made navigation difficult.

Dominic Manley informed that with regards to dropped kerbs he mentioned that it may be difficult to make adaptations for all disabilities but they needed to be compliant and consideration should be given to dependent and independent access.

The Chairman said that there had been a number of issues raised and requested a future update on them.

Peter Haley reminded the Forum of the plan to move Shopmobility to West Street car park during the regeneration of the Nicholson centre and highlighted the lack of dropped kerbs around that car park. Officers said they would arrange a site visit.

Tim Golabek informed that with regards to the Castle Hill pedestrian project in Windsor it was still planned to go ahead but was still in the tender process.

The Forum noted the updates.

UPDATE ON ACTIVE TRAVEL

Item considered as part of the previous agenda item.

UPDATE ON CORPORATE PLAN, LGA PEER REVIEW AND INEQUALITIES

Rebeca Hatch, Head of Strategy, informed the Forum that she joined the authority in August 2021 and that this was a new position.

The Forum were informed that the key priorities for her team were:

- Corporate Plan and a new performance framework
- LGA Corporate Peer Challenge
- Equalities
- Engagement
- Supporting the development of key strategies
- Building capacity across the organisation

The Forum were informed that the new Corporate Plan was agreed at Full Council on 23rd November 2021 and set out the council's overarching strategy for the next five years. It focused on the changes that we want to deliver within the borough, responding to both opportunities and challenges. The Plan set specific goals for the outcomes.

The Forum were shown a summary of the Corporate Plan, with an overarching vision of 'Creating a sustainable borough of opportunity and innovation'.

There are three overarching objectives:

- Thriving Communities
- Inspiring Places
- A council trusted to deliver its promises

Three further priority objectives have been identified under these, focused on:

- Climate change and environment
- Quality infrastructure
- A ladder of housing opportunity

For transparency so the public can see how we were progressing with delivering the Corporate Plan there would be a new public facing Citizen's Portal to enable the public to track progress on delivering the 50 Corporate Plan goals.

The Chairman asked who would be contributing the new portal and was informed that each of the 50 goals had a nominated owner who would be responsible for uploading data onto the portal.

The Forum were informed that The Royal Borough invited the Local Government Association into the council to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge from 24-27 January 2022. The findings would be published on the Council's website and Cabinet would be approving an action plan.

The key findings reported back to the Council were:

- Council has made good progress on most of the recommendations from 2017/19 Peer reviews, despite Covid.

- New Corporate Plan has given RBWM a strong "Guiding Star" for the future. 2022 needs to be about embedding it, including the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Chief Executive recognised by Members staff and stakeholders as leading a positive change agenda at RBWM.
- COVID had helped the authority reconnect with residents and community groups.
- Council recognises that it is at an early stage in improving Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The Leader and Chief Executive however are both committed to progressing this agenda.

Strengthening the Council's approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion was an important part of delivering on the Peer review recommendations, part of this work would be done by:

- Reviewing and improving Equality Impact Assessments
- Response to Cost of Living increases.
- Broader focus on understanding and responding to inequalities and disadvantage in the borough.

The Forum were informed that they were an important part of this process and they were asked how their experiences and expertise could be best utilised.

The Chairman said the Forum would look at this and bring it back to the next meeting.

NEW EQUALITIES AND ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

The Forum were informed that a new Equalities and Engagement Officer had been recruited and would sit in the Head of Strategy's team.

UPDATE ON DAY OPPORTUNITIES CONSULTATION

The Forum were provided with an update on day opportunities.

Lynne Lidster, Head of Commissioning – People, informed the Forum that she was attending to give a progress update on the changes to day opportunities for both older people and people with a learning disability following the consultation and decision by Cabinet in November 2021.

The Forum were informed that Cabinet had approved the changes because we wanted people to be able to choose the kinds of things that they want to do and not just go to day centres we wanted to help people to have skills to be independent so they could do things like getting a job if they wanted one and to enable them to make the most of things in Windsor and Maidenhead.

An extensive consultation exercise had been undertaken and examples of the varied methods used was provided. There had been over 100 survey submissions received from customers, partners, staff, stockholders and the public. Most people said that they wanted the day services to be better for everyone and so that people could go to a day centre or do other things like go to the sports centre. There was a need identified to have a smaller, building based day centre for people with a learning disability in Windsor.

To help achieve these aspirations it had been decided that:

- Boyn Grove Day Centre would stay open
- There will be a smaller day centre in Windsor at the Mencap Hub building for people who need to be supported in a building so Oakbridge will close
- Windsor Day Centre would close and older people will be referred to Boyn Grove, Old Windsor Day Centre and Spencer Denny Day Centre

- “Out and About” services would be put in place so that older people and people with a learning disability have more choice about what they want to do.

Officers had been working with Windsor MENCAP and talking about how they plan to use the HUB. There were 3 drop-in days for family carers to visit the building and discuss how they feel about the changes and to talk about our plans for the future. The Forum were shown picture of the interior and exterior of the building.

The Forum were also shown pictures of a variety of activities that were being provided by a wide variety of organisations.

The Chairman asked for further information about ArtAble and was informed that it was a very popular service that had started in Maidenhead and was being expanded into Windsor. There were a wide range of activities for all abilities boosting confidence, a sense of pride and achievement.

It was noted that the new building in Windsor would be managed by Mencap, that their old building had no bus stop nearby and that the Old Court needed improved wheelchair access.

The Forum noted the presentation.

SEND STRATEGY 2022-27 UPDATE

Kelly Nash, Area SENCo AfC RBWM provided the Forum with an update on the SEND Strategy Consultation.

The Forum were informed that the purpose of the SEND Strategy was to implement an efficient and inclusive system where we work together with families, children and young people aged 0-25, to develop trust and confidence in order to build genuine and good quality partnerships.

To help achieve this, 6 priorities had been identified, they were:

- Gathering Voices
- Early identification
- Inclusive mainstream schools
- Focus on targeted intervention
- Develop specialist provision
- Building resilient, confident and independent children and young people.

There was an interim strategy in place whilst the consultation on new 5-year strategy (2022-2027) was undertaken and finished on 28th February 2022. There had been 108 responses in total, 62% Parent and carers/21% school staff. Overall the majority strongly agreed with the draft sections.

The new strategy would be developed based on what we know and the consultation results and when implemented a stakeholder event will be arranged to discuss how the new strategy could be implemented.

The Forum welcomed the transparency and engagement with parents and careers, there had been a lot of engagement.

The Forum noted the presentation.

UPDATE ON BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

The Forum were informed that the Council had approved the new Borough Local Plan the new Lead Member responsible for planning could not attend as he was attending a funeral.

PARALLEL WINDSOR EVENT

Andrew Douglas attended the meeting to provide an update on the work of Parallel.

The Forum were informed that Parallel was a disability lifestyle brand with purpose and an attitude of no limits living for those with a disability. He informed that one of the biggest social problems in the world is disability inclusion. In the UK there were 13.9 million disabled people. As a social enterprise, their aim was to support disabled people to be free to live life to the full in mainstream society.

To help achieve this purpose, they created their award-winning flagship event, Parallel Windsor. He thanked the Crown Estate and Cllr Rayner for their support. The event was due to take place on 26th June 2022 at the Windsor Great Park and Long Walk.

There was a 'start together, finish whenever' events with a range of fully accessible distances with no cut off times from 10km to 100m including a sensory event. It was to encouraging people of all ages and abilities to challenge themselves to get moving, get sensory and get social.

There would also be a festival of inclusivity. This would be a fun, free and fully accessible family fest featuring themed interactive zones; including active lifestyle, technology, entertainment, literature, mobility, travel and community events and activities. There would also be a main performance stage for music, a stage for talks, a food village, a charity village and various workshops.

The Chairman said that it sounded like a wonderful event and asked if there was a charge to take part and about parking. The Forum were informed that it was free to come to the festival, there were a not-for-profit enterprise and got their income from sponsorships. There was a charge for taking part in some of the events with a range of tickets being available.

With regards to parking the Forum were informed that they were expecting 5000 visitors so were looking for 2000 parking spaces that were accessible. They were currently talking to the Crown Estate about parking. They were also looking at running shuttle buses.

It was also noted that they had been in contact with SportsAble and East Berkshire Disability Network.

The Forum noted the presentation.

CONSULTATIONS

Rachel Kinniburgh said she would circulate a list of any current consultations.

The Chairman informed the Forum of her intention to write to the Transport Minister about Smart Motorways and the impact on disabled drivers or passengers using them. She welcomed comments from the Forum, for example what would they do if they had a breakdown not near a refuge area

DATE OF NEXT FORUM

The date of the next Forum will be 20 June 2022.

The meeting, which began at 11.00 am, finished at 1.12 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....