

WINDSOR TOWN FORUM

TUESDAY, 17 MAY 2022

PRESENT: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Sayonara Luxton, Christine Bateson, David Cannon, Jon Davey, Karen Davies, Neil Knowles, Helen Price, Shamsul Shelim, Amy Tisi and David Hilton

Also in attendance: Councillor John Baldwin, Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra and Councillor Donna Stimson

Officers: Mark Beeley, Paul Roach, Tim Golabek and David Scott

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rayner, Councillor Luxton attended the meeting as substitute.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Councillor Price asked for clarification on whether the restrictions which had been in place in Windsor on feeding swans had now been lifted.

David Scott, Head of Communities, confirmed that restrictions had now been lifted.

Councillor Price commented on the 'big lunch', which would be taking place on the Long Walk over the Jubilee weekend. She was aware that all tables had now been booked but had seen communication asking those taking part not to arrive before 11am.

Paul Roach, Windsor, Eton and Ascot Town Manager, confirmed that all picnic table positions had sold out but there was still room for people to bring their own picnic and use the available space. He was not aware of the point raised regarding 11am, he would check this after the meeting.

ACTION – Paul Roach to confirm if participants attending the big lunch over the Jubilee weekend were being asked not to arrive before 11am.

Councillor Tisi said that there was also an event on the Saturday on the Long Walk, where there was no need for visitors to book.

Paul Roach added that 'Party in the Park' was taking place on Saturday with a number of catering units along with a screening of the 'Party in the Palace' event. On Sunday, the lunch on the Long Walk would take place.

Councillor Price mentioned improvement works to Victoria Street car park and asked if there was anything planned.

The Chairman believed that there would be a general clean of the town centre before the Jubilee and he hoped that the car park would be included in that.

Paul Roach said that the usual cleaning regime would be in place but there was nothing additional planned.

Councillor Price explained that there were tiles missing in the toilets and other issues which needed to be rectified, she did not want this to be overlooked.

Paul Roach said that he was happy to have a look and would discuss if any physical changes were planned as part of the maintenance schedule for the car park.

ACTION – Paul Roach to check with the Head of Neighbourhood Services on whether any improvement works would be taking place at Victoria Steet car park.

Councillor Davey believed that there was work planned for the car park but he was not sure whether it would happen or not. It was a similar scenario to the bridge at the station, work was being done to investigate if there were any structural issues with the bridge before it was repainted.

TOWN MANAGER UPDATE

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the order of agenda items was changed, so that Town Manager Update was considered first.

Paul Roach said it had been a busy weekend, with the Royal Windsor Horse Show and Windsor Vegan Market taking place. For those interested in the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, it was worth looking at the website which contained extensive information and further details on the events which were taking place. On the Thursday, the ox roast and beacon event would be taking place, while the party in the park and the big lunch would take place over the weekend. Considering footfall, this was up on last year by 68% but was down around 10% on the same period from 2019. Windsor was doing well on footfall compared to the national figure. On car parking, the town was up 48% and this was also up on the 2019 figure which was a positive start and there had been an increase in visitor numbers.

Paul Roach discussed the vacancy rate, he was unable to give an exact figure but had received a number of comments which were concerned about the number of vacant units. Paul Roach said that there would be a lot of change over the coming months, with a number of new businesses planning to open up in Windsor. Both shopping centres would see a number of units being added to the portfolio, things were looking a lot more positive. A lot of the new units would be food related rather than retail, this was due to the market and demand currently.

The Chairman asked for confirmation on which roads around Windsor would be closed over the Jubilee weekend.

Paul Roach informed the Chairman that for the Eton street party, the one way section would be closed from 6am – 9pm. In Windsor, there were currently no plans for any road closures. There would be some parking suspensions including Park Street gate to Park Street and Brook Street. This would allow adequate space for visitors to enter and leave the planned events and also to allow access for the emergency services. These suspensions would take place on both the Saturday and the Sunday of the Jubilee weekend. The events taking place on the Long Walk would potentially attract crowds of around 10,000 which was why events were planned here rather than in the town centre.

The Chairman asked which day the beacon lighting event would take place. This was confirmed to be on Thursday 2nd June outside Cambridge Gate. The event would include

performances from local schools and a fireworks display which would seem like it was taking place above Windsor Castle.

Councillor Tisi added that the Clewer and Dedworth 'picnic in the park', which was also known as 'Rock the Rec', would be taking place in July and therefore would not clash with the Jubilee events.

Councillor Price commented on the increased police presence which had been seen in Windsor over the past few weekends.

Paul Roach explained that Thames Valley Police had been involved in an operation over the past six weeks each Sunday looking at youth anti-social behaviour. Issues had been raised last year that certain activity was taking place in some premises and significant work had been undertaken to identify the individuals involved. This had seen an increased police presence in the town centre, with this operation being possible due to special funding being made available. The police were also working with a number of local businesses to resolve any issues.

Councillor Price reported that she had heard from shopkeepers that were worried to leave their premises at the end of the day as they feared for their personal safety.

Paul Roach responded by saying that he was not aware of that being reported, there would be time taken to review the data and results from the operation.

Jeff Pick, Thames Valley Police, added that the operation centred around large groups of people generally aged between 12-16 years old. The main issue was that they were loud and disruptive, no serious incidents had been reported.

Councillor Baldwin commented on the parking figures which had been delivered as part of the update. The target was to improve on the figures from 2019, which was reported to be up. He asked for clarification on how parking was up, whether it was increased usage or increased revenue. The residents discount parking scheme had recently been introduced and Councillor Baldwin asked how well this had been working. Councillor Baldwin asked if the fireworks show which was part of the Jubilee celebrations had been through the appropriate risk assessment process.

Paul Roach confirmed that parking figures were based on usage, revenue would vary with each car park, depending on things like the size and price to park. In April 2022, there had been 82,000 users while in April 2019 this figure was 78,000, showing that there had been an increase. He was happy to take the comment away and see if the parking team were able to provide some data on car parking revenue in Windsor. All of the key events in Windsor have gone through the Safety Advisory Group in the last month or so.

ACTION – Paul Roach to speak to the parking team to see if data could be provided for car parking income in Windsor.

The Chairman said that the car parks in River Street had seen an increase in usage due to recent events like the Royal Windsor Horse Show, there needed to be consideration to balance the income and usage figures.

Councillor Price asked where residents could go to find out information on all of the events taking place over the Jubilee weekend.

Paul Roach explained that the Windsor Platinum Jubilee website had all of the relevant information which could be accessed by residents. There was a tool to also upload events, so that residents could add their local events to the website.

ELECTRIC CHARGING POINTS

Tim Golabek, Service Lead – Transport and Infrastructure, said that market engagement had recently taken place. Officers had met with 12 different operators of charging infrastructure to understand what was available to local authorities and what would be best for residents and businesses. An implementation plan would be created, this was currently being worked through and was planned for consultation in early autumn, with a decision by Cabinet to be made by the end of the year. In addition to this, six charging points had been installed across the borough, with three in Windsor. Research would be done to see if the points were being used as anticipated, electric vehicle charging was a growing market particularly with the ban on sales of new petrol and diesel vehicles in 2030. On locations, Tim Golabek said that 'Zap Map' was a useful tool which showed the locations of EV charging points. Funding was driven by central government, more information on this was available on the electric vehicle home charge scheme government website.

Councillor Luxton asked if there were any EV charging points being installed in car parks that were owned by RBWM. She also noted that there was nothing for the Ascot and Sunningdale areas of the borough, the charging points had so far only been installed in Maidenhead and Windsor.

Tim Golabek said that the locations depended on where there was space available, the roll out had started with Maidenhead and Windsor but other areas would also be considered in future, once further funding had been made available. Officers were looking at where EV chargers could be located in car parks, the Zap Map would show residents where the current locations were.

Councillor Luxton underlined that she felt Ascot she be prioritised. The Chairman added that Eton and Eton Wick should also be included for consideration.

Nicholas Warner, resident, felt that good progress had been made, he lived on a street which had an EV charger. He said that the locations of the chargers could be further apart as currently parking spaces were close together, there was the possibility that a car could block two EV chargers at one time. Nicholas Warner suggested that painted bays would help to prevent this problem from occurring. Another issue was the spaces were used by those who drove non-electric cars, so the EV chargers were not accessible and this needed to be taken into account by RBWM officers when the occupancy and usage of the EV chargers was considered. Nicholas Warner said that the EV charger spaces should be for electric vehicles only, or a time limit could be introduced. Visitors to Windsor needed more rapid chargers available for them to use, this in turn would help to attract more visitors.

Tim Golabek said that it was a balance when it came to making the spaces electric vehicle only. The council did not want to take away spaces where was significant demand but then it needed to make sure that the EV chargers were accessible and could be used. It was a balance, Tim Golabek said that he was happy to work with Mr Warner offline on the points that he had raised.

Councillor Tisi understood that areas of the borough where there were fewer driveways were prioritised, she asked if there were places like this outside of the town centre.

Tim Golabek explained that it would be part of the consultation plan, it was important to see what the uptake in EV chargers was before the number could be increased. Commercial providers could play a role in the future to ensure that the needs of all residents were met.

Councillor Tisi asked if RBWM was looking to work with private companies where car parks could be used out of hours to allow more residents to park and use EV chargers.

Tim Golabek said he would take the suggestion away and report it back to the team, a number of factors needed to be considered on this suggestion.

Councillor Cannon commented on the location of two of the EV chargers, they had been placed outside a residential care home where there was no spare parking capacity. A number of residents were not aware that the EV chargers were in place.

Tim Golabek confirmed that he would feed this back to the team. There was a conflict between parking spaces and access to the EV charging points.

Councillor Baldwin said that putting EV charging points in residential streets was not taking parking away from residents, it was giving residents in that street the opportunity to charge their vehicle.

At this point, Tim Golabek needed to leave the meeting. The Chairman advised that if there were any further questions that needed to be asked, they could be emailed to the officer after the meeting.

THAMES VALLEY POLICE UPDATE

Jeff Pick said that the latest crime stats for Windsor had been circulated to Members ahead of the meeting.

Councillor Davies commented on the stats regarding 'cars which had been entered by unknown means'. She asked if this included residents who left their car unlocked.

Jeff Pick said that it was opportunistic thieves that just walked along roads trying door handles, they did not use any other gadgets or tools. Small items that had been left in cars were stolen. The community safety volunteers would be undertaking a car campaign to ensure that residents could protect themselves from being a target. The volunteers would patrol the area and if they spotted any items left clearly in cars, they would send a letter to the owners making them aware. On bike crime, TVP were promoting the use of bike trackers which could be used if a bike was stolen, work was being done in partnership with the bike hub at the Swan Inn.

There had been a number of changes to the local police force, with a number of personnel moving on or being deployed to different parts of the borough. A burglary campaign was planned, particularly as more people were leaving windows open in the summer months. Leaflets would be put through open windows, warning residents of the dangers of leaving an open window unattended. Community speed watch was now entirely carried out by the community and there had been a lot of negative feedback to the changes. There were currently two speed watch groups, in Cookham and Wraysbury. To create a speed watch area, residents needed to have a group of at least three people come together to raise the issue. The community safety volunteer team would be able to assist the carrying out of a community speed watch, if required.

Councillor Cannon felt that the constant changing of police staff was not efficient and was not beneficial to the local community. Public protection was in his Cabinet Member portfolio and he would be investigating the matter, the police service needed to have some stability.

Jeff Pick added that it took time for officers to build relationships with the local community. The changes were inevitable due to the current shortage of staff.

The Chairman agreed with the comments made about the changes. He said that he had seen two police officers undertaking a speed watch on the A322. Traffic coming into Windsor was having to slow down from 50mph to 30mph, but the officers were focused on the road going out of Windsor. He asked what justified this speed watch as he did not feel there were any accidents on this road. The Chairman said that there were other roads in the borough where there were speeding issues and these should be prioritised.

Jeff Pick said he would speak to the traffic division to find out why the speed watch had taken place.

ACTION – Jeff Pick to report back to Councillor Bowden on the details of the speed watch which had recently taken place on the A322.

Councillor Price commented on the changes to the speed watch scheme, residents would now have to fund their own equipment. She believed that there was a long delay between a speed watch being carried out and any further action being taken.

Jeff Pick explained that there were initially plans to buy 50 sets of equipment but the funding for this did not appear. When a driver was caught speeding, up to three letters were sent to their address, depending on how many times they have been caught. If there were any further issues after this, then enforcement action could be pursued. The biggest scheme currently running in RBWM was in Bourne End, with over 1000 letters being sent out in the first month.

Councillor Davey said that depending on residents to buy their own equipment to undertake a speed watch was not what TVP should be doing. It was unrealistic to have 3 people live on the same street that would be happy to take part, making it very difficult to actually undertake a community speed watch.

Jeff Pick said the reaction to the changes to the speed watch scheme had not been positive, he would pass it back to officers at TVP.

Councillor Knowles said there was appetite for residents to get involved, he would be discussing it with his parish council.

Jeff Pick confirmed that as long as three people were signed up on the website, the community safety volunteers could help run the actual speed watch.

CCTV SYSTEM REVIEW

David Scott, Head of Communities, gave an update on CCTV around Windsor. The town centre and the areas centred around the night time economy had good coverage. The CCTV control room team worked closely with Thames Valley Police and incidents were tracked on a daily basis, this helped both deter and detect crimes. RBWM was able to mobilise other teams to respond to incidents with the control room team covering the CCTV around the town 24/7. In many incidents, arrests and sanctions were successfully pursued by TVP. Considering camera coverage, there were 132 cameras across the whole borough and there were also a number of cameras in car parks, covering both different floors and the access stairwells. In 2018/19, the system was upgraded from analogue to a digital based system. This improved the resolution, zoom capacity and the ability to work in different lighting levels. Cameras were deployed in a range of different places and heights, they were strategically placed so that individuals of concern could be tracked. The control room was based in Tinkers Lane, with up to four work stations available.

Considering incidents, there had been around 1,500 incidents in the Windsor area in 2021. There had been 174 arrests which had been as a result of CCTV coverage. The system was being used to both deter and detect crime by proving reassurance to residents. RBWM was looking at areas where there was poor or no coverage and how this could be improved. There had been a shift away from each camera having its own direct line, with regional hubs now connecting cameras to the control room.

Councillor Davey commented on the number of incidents and arrests, he asked if there was any data on those who were found guilty and were fined. He asked if the nature of the incidents could be shared.

David Scott said that he did not have the data on the number that were charged once arrested. He would be able to ask the team for further analysis of the nature of incidents and share this with Members of the Forum.

ACTION – David Scott to share analysis on the nature of the 1,500 incidents which had been recorded in Windsor in 2021.

Councillor Davey said that when the new CCTV system was first brought in, there were some issues with trees blocking the wireless signals. He asked if this had now been rectified.

David Scott said that not all cameras were connected wirelessly. Some of the disruption was due to conflict with the wireless range, this had been rectified. Trees continued to be a challenge but work was ongoing to ensure that the signal was not affected.

Councillor Davey said that he had recently attended an RBWM Youth Council meeting where they discussed a report that had been submitted on night time safety and safety for women and girls.

David Scott confirmed that he had seen the report, he was attending a Thames Valley wide launch event later in the week. There was a goal in the Corporate Plan around how safe women and girls felt in the borough, there was a range of initiatives in place to support this goal.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman said that he had recently had some additional training on licensing, TVP would need to support RBWM more with licensing renewals by providing more evidence which could then be considered by the licensing team. Some new electric vehicles were taking over six months to be delivered due to a chip shortage. A proposal was made by a resident on the use of York House as there had been a recent newspaper article about its usage. It would also be useful for the Head of Neighbourhood Services to give an update on cleaning and maintenance around Windsor, including the train bridge.

Councillor Price asked for the update on maintenance to only focus on Windsor and not other surrounding areas. She suggested that an update from the community wardens would be useful. A representative from the Windsor homeless project on Alma Road should be invited to a meeting to give an update on how that work was progressing. Finally, Councillor Price said that another update was due on air pollution, which a lot of residents were concerned about.

Councillor Davey said it would be good to invite those that were involved with the Jubilee activities and celebrations to hear how things went.

Councillor Shelim said that the electricity price had increased and people were looking to invest in solar panels. There were some government grants available, it would be good to have an item where information was shared to residents through the Town Forum.

Councillor Price asked for more written reports to be included as part of the agenda for Town Forum meetings.

Mark Beeley, Democratic Services Officer, said that the Head of Governance was exploring with officers the possibility of more physical reports being brought to meetings of the Forum. It was important to balance this with the workload of officers, as a physical report took more to prepare in advance of a meeting.

Councillor Davies said that she had received communication about the 'solar together' scheme which RBWM was taking part in. She thought that letters would be going out to residents shortly, James Thorpe might be interested in attending a meeting of the Forum to discuss the scheme.

David Scott said that he was sure an information item could be produced for Members on the topic of solar panels.

Councillor Davey said it would be good to look at local services regarding solar panels.

WINDSOR CONSULTATIONS

Councillor Price said that there would be consultations on the Windsor Vision and active travel soon. Consultations on the Community Safety Partnership and the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment were currently ongoing. She asked when the Windsor Vision consultation would start.

David Scott suggested that the Executive Director of Place would be able to provide details after the meeting.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 13th July 2022, starting at 6.30pm.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....