

WINDSOR TOWN FORUM

WEDNESDAY, 13 JULY 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Samantha Rayner (Chairman), John Bowden, Sayonara Luxton, David Hilton, Shamsul Shelim, Gary Muir, Jon Davey, Karen Davies, Neil Knowles, Helen Price and Amy Tisi

Also in attendance: Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra, Councillor Gurch Singh and Councillor John Baldwin

Officers: Oran Norris-Browne, Paul Roach, Steph James, Julia White and Saloni Radia

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Cannon. Councillor Bowden attended as a substitute. It was noted that both Councillors Knowles & Davey would join the meeting momentarily.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at the beginning of the meeting. However, during the town manager update, the Chairman declared an interest, being that she was a director at the Community Interest Company (CIC) who helped deliver the events at the long walk over the bank holiday weekend in Windsor.

MINUTES

<u>Actions from previous meeting</u>	<u>Updates</u>
ACTION – Paul Roach to confirm if participants attending the big lunch over the Jubilee weekend were being asked not to arrive before 11am.	Action was completed
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.	The Head of Neighbourhood Services had been contacted. General maintenance and cleaning of the car park does regularly occur. The 2 nd element of this was the state of the toilets. This was a part of a capital bid, but this was ongoing.
ACTION – Paul Roach to speak to the parking team to see if data could be provided for car parking income in Windsor.	Neil Walter had been contacted and he was going to contact Councillor Baldwin personally.
ACTION – Jeff Pick to report back to Councillor Bowden on the details of the speed watch which had recently taken place on the A322.	Jeff Pick, TVP, said that all Community Speed watch had been suspended currently.
ACTION – David Scott to share analysis on the nature of the 1,500 incidents which had been recorded in Windsor in 2021.	The clerk informed the forum that David Scott had been contacted, but he would chase this up offline.

Councillor Price asked if the Windsor Vision and Windsor Yards could be added as an agenda item. The Chairman said that this could be discussed during the work programme section of the meeting.

Ed Wilson, resident, asked for the general state and upkeep of Victoria Street Car Park be added to a future agenda too. The Chairman acknowledged this.

(Councillor Muir and Councillor Knowles joined the meeting)

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2022, be a true and accurate reflection.

THAMES VALLEY POLICE UPDATE

The forum noted the written report that had been provided by Jeff Pick, Thames Valley Police.

Jeff Pick suggested that an enormous number of catalytic convertors had been stolen in recent times from the Legoland Windsor Resort. The issue that existed was the barriers to the car parks. These opened upon approach, which allowed drivers to drive in and out of the car park with pure ease, allowing them to commit crime whilst going undetected. The resort said that they could not change this due to public transport needing access to the car park such as coaches, buses, and Ubers. He said that it had been Thames Valley Police's advice that the resort should increase security presence and install additional CCTV cameras.

Councillor Davies asked about policing over the Jubilee weekend and how it went.

Jeff Pick admitted that they had been overwhelmed in terms of attendance, however this was simply due to the fact that everybody wished to be in Windsor for the celebrations as it was the hub. He then stated that it was a calm and family-orientated atmosphere and there were no real issues for the Police to report, admitting that they had enjoyed it as much as the public had.

The Chairman thanked Jeff Pick and the whole of Thames Valley Police for the hard work that they had put in, to make the celebrations a success.

Councillor Price asked Jeff Pick if there was anything he could do in terms of working with Legoland Windsor to address the issues of the catalytic convertor thefts, it would be much appreciated. She added that there had been increased social media posts of car thefts and asked if anything could be done about this.

Jeff Pick had asked Alice, who was a member of his team to contact local Ward Councillors and keep them updated on what was going on, in order to put pressure onto Legoland to aid the Police with the situation. Jeff Pick also issued caution about social media posts, suggesting that some posts may have been untrue, or they may have been true stories, but the incidents had not been reported to the Police. Videos are usually put on social media to inform their neighbours, but they are sometimes not reported to the Police via the 101-telephone number, or more easily via the Thames Valley Police's website.

Councillor Hilton said that there had been an increased number of car thefts in the south of the borough, with many being keyless entry. He asked if this differed from issues in Windsor.

Jeff Pick said that this varied, with the majority of vehicles that were being stolen being Range Rovers and Land Rover Discoveries for example. In Windsor there were many of these cars, making the issue more prevalent. Many residents had never heard of a faraday cage for keyless fobs. Councillor Hilton asked for some written information on this, to which Jeff Pick agreed too.

ACTION: Jeff Pick to send clerk information on faraday pouches and safe storing of car keys.

Councillor Price asked if the issues that were being seen on Sundays had been sorted out. Jeff Pick replied by saying that the 2 previous Sundays had seen virtually no incidents and wished for this to continue.

(Councillor Singh and Councillor Baldwin joined the meeting)

Councillor Muir said that his car had been broken into recently and wished to inform his neighbours to be vigilant. Jeff Pick said that the main means of entry for thieves now was to try door handles, rather than smashing car windows.

The Chairman thanked Jeff Pick for his report and his attendance.

TOWN MANAGER UPDATE

Paul Roach, Windsor & Eton Town Manager presented the forum with a written report, which provided the forum with a town manager update.

(Councillor Davey joined the meeting)

Paul Roach said that businesses were predominantly doing fairly well, however it was appearing that footfall was beginning to be affected by the current high inflation rate and the cost-of-living crisis. Car parking figures appeared to begin the 1st financial quarter quite well, however this was beginning to decrease on the 2019 figures. Coach parking was around 80-90% down on previous years, which was expected to stay at this level in the near future.

Paul Roach said that significant increases in footfall were seen during May 2022, however this was beginning to decrease slightly. However, it had generally been positive during the last financial quarter. The busiest day of June 2022 was Thursday 2 June 2022, which saw 41,422 visitors come to the town, with the peak hour of the month being 12pm on this day with a footfall of 4,448 people. Over 600,000 movements had been registered over the bank holiday weekend. This had been the busiest in 4 years since the royal wedding in 2018.

Paul Roach said in terms of vacancy rates, Windsor was still below the national average. He then outlined the venues that had vacated the town, but also the stores that had recently opened and were planning to open soon. The vacancy rates of Clewer, Dedworth and Ascot had remained reasonably stable in comparison.

Paul Roach said in relation to Windsor Yards and the consultations that had occurred, there was still a website that existed for comments that would be taken into account. This website could be accessed at the following, [windsor-yard-boards.pdf \(windsorconsultation.co.uk\)](https://windsor-yard-boards.pdf(windsorconsultation.co.uk)) Over 300 comments had been received and it had been quite a positive response. He added that Windsor Yards were aiming to carry out the works, whilst still having a fully operational shopping centre.

Paul Roach then shared some images with the forum members which showed attendance levels at events over the Jubilee weekend. He commented that the 'Rock the Rec' event had also been very successful and very popular. These events included the Ox Roast, the Beacon Lighting, the Picnic in the Park, the 115th Royal Windsor Flower Show and the Gloriana.

Paul Roach said that there were 25 plus street parties that had been registered with the borough within Windsor. He thanked all volunteers who helped deliver on these events.

Reported sales over the week of the Jubilee celebrations increased by between 50 and 200%. The media reach was upwards of 64 million people, and this would continue to rise throughout the rest of 2022. There was £1.44 million worth of media coverage.

Before any questions were asked of Paul, the Chairman declared an interest, being that she was a director at the Community Interest Company (CIC) who helped deliver the events at the long walk over the bank holiday weekend. She thanked Paul Roach and Julia White for all of their hard work.

Councillor Tisi noted that the footfall level was not decreasing as much as the car parking figures had. She questioned why this would potentially be the case and if walking and cycling levels were monitored.

Paul Roach said that this was not currently monitored, however a recent meeting had discussed this possibility. Additionally, he said that a lot of people who attended the Jubilee events did not use the car parks, and instead parked their cars anywhere they could, such as on pavements. He admitted that people were potentially looking at the different ways they travelled into Windsor.

Councillor Price said that she was pleased to see the successes of the celebrations, but she raised some concern as to the risk assessments that had been carried out on some of the events. She had attended the Beacon Lighting from Albert Road and decided to stay well back from the crowds due to the sheer volume of people. She implored the borough to use this as experience for any future events and that the forum also covered businesses within the suburbs of Windsor, who she wished for encouragement for people to attend the opened businesses who were finding things difficult. She also raised concern over the closure of banks. Residents could still use the Post Office, as well as other existing banks for some banking needs.

Paul Roach admitted that both the Council and the Police were not expecting the amount of people that turned up for the Beacon Lighting. The BBC had also reported that the Queen would be lighting the beacon and that she was in Windsor. This was factually correct, but she was to light the beacon in London and not Windsor. This attracted many people to the event.

Jeff Pick wished to echo Councillor Price's concern over the closure of banks due to vulnerable people potentially withdrawing excess cash to see them through. This put them at greater risk, both in public and at home.

Paul Roach wanted to make it clear that not all banks had closed, and that ATM's and banks did still exist in the town centre. He then listed out these options that were available.

Councillor Davies asked in term so vacancies if the borough were losing out financially on rent as well as business rates.

Paul Roach said that to his knowledge, all of the premises that the borough owned were currently being let. The Chairman also confirmed this.

Councillor Davey asked for the Chairman and Paul Roach if they could potentially speak with the Windsor Yards and ask if they could run any sessions in the Dedworth area, as 300 respondents to the consultation was great, but this was only a small percentage of Windsor residents. Information was left off the website, until after the consultation events, to encourage attendees to go to them.

Councillor Bowden said that comments regarding Windsor Yards should be restricted slightly, due to the matter soon to be coming to the planning department. He also added a few businesses that would be opening in Windsor too. These included Ollie and Steen and a new food unit on Peascod Street. 2 new units on Peascod street had been acquired too, in order to facilitate the new developments.

Councillor Bowden then went on to thank all of the residents of Park Street and said that they were virtually invaded by visitors to the Beacon Lighting. In terms of parking, he said that all car parks were full, and it was lucky that no parking enforcement was in operation over the Jubilee weekend.

Councillor Muir asked about affordable housing, but the Chairman asked for this to be sorted between them offline due to this not being on the agenda.

Ed Wilson said that the borough operated 100% relief for empty shops for the first 3 months, and that then 100% business rates were charged from then on. He asked about the Hello Lamppost scheme and what was happening with it. He also asked who was responsible for promoting the resident discount parking scheme. His final question was asking whether it was possible to get any success stories on newly opened sites in Windsor onto the resident newsletter.

Steph James, Service Lead for Economic Growth, said that the Hello Lamppost scheme was an experiment to aid the borough in reopening after the pandemic. This was funded through the Welcome Back European Social Funding money. She confirmed that this scheme would not be continued. The resident discount parking scheme was promoted via the usual comms links. My Royal Borough was being utilised greatly, and businesses were being encouraged to engage and reach out to them.

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL ECONOMY IN WINDSOR

Steph James, Service Lead for Economic Growth, Saloni Radia, Economic Development Officer and Julia White, Visitor Marketing Manager presented a written report to the forum members which gave an overview of the local economy in Windsor. This was accompanied by a presentation, which forum members noted.

Saloni Radia outlined a global context, which showed a global slowdown of economic growth and a very rapid increase in inflation, largely due to the war in Ukraine. The UK's GDP growth also slowed, tracking in May 2022 at around 4.8%, which was now lower than that of Germany, France, Italy, and Japan. It was predicted that UK growth was to drop to around 3.9% in 2022 and 1.1% in 2023, which would follow the cost-of-living crisis.

Saloni Radia said that the UK's annual consumption growth in 2021 was 6.2% and that it was predicted to fall to 4.3% in 2022, and 0.5% in 2023. The inflation rate was currently the highest it had been in 40 years, with there also being a current fall in real wages, which was not expected to increase again until 2025. Consumer confidence also fell to its second lowest level in almost 50 years during April 2022. Employment levels were growing in the borough, however the average salary had dropped in recent months, which reflected the lower pay rates within the areas of job growth.

Steph James shared the KPI's from Windsor town centre with the forum members but did not elaborate on them due to them having been covered within the earlier town manager update.

Julia White said that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) were predicting that international visits and spending would not increase at all during the financial year 2022/23. The UK had received 5.9 million international visits during the first four months of 2022. Inbound visitors spent £4.3 billion from January to April 2022, as with visits, spending went up month by month.

Julia White said that paid attractions were likely to receive less visitors and therefore income due to the effects of covid and also the effects that the current cost-of-living-crisis was having on people. However, visits to free attractions were to instead increase because of this. This included attractions such as Windsor Great Park, which was listed as the most visited outdoor

attraction in the country so far this year. She then said that the issues that were being seen with flights and airport travel meant that the borough's hotels were benefiting quite well.

As Paul Roach had mentioned, coach parking figures were down compared to the pre-pandemic levels. Windsor Castle was now closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays which in turn would have a negative impact on coach parking figures anyway. The groups business was appearing to return slowly. Staffing issues also appeared to be a key issue in providing all services within the hospitality sector.

Steph James then outlined some key issues that were currently facing the borough. These were:

- Recruitment and retention of staff.
- Cost of Living.
- Increase in business overheads (High energy prices).
- Resurgence of Covid-19 within the UK.
- Disruption to flights affecting tourism.
- Increase in business crime (Shop thefts and ASB).

In terms of the support that was available, Steph James said that this included the following:

- My Royal Borough.
- Berkshire Growth Hub.
- Visit Windsor Partnership.
- Windsor, Eton & Ascot Town Partnership.
- Night Time Economy (NTE) Working Group.

Steph James said that My Royal Borough business networking sessions were restarting in July 2022. The economic vision for the borough was being developed, with focus groups planned within the local business community. Business engagement was seen as a priority for the Economic Growth team.

The Chairman thanked the Economic Growth team for their presentation and all of their hard work. Job fairs across the borough were also seeing high attendance. Meetings also occurred every Tuesday morning with shops, to discuss anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Tisi asked about the night time economy working group and if residents wished to be involved, how would they be. The Chairman replied by saying that the group was organised by Thames Valley Police and that residents were invited to it. The group met every quarter, and it would be held virtually online going forward.

Councillor Price asked if a heavier focus would now be put onto domestic tourists due to the reduction in international tourist numbers. Julia White said that no money had been spent on international marketing this year and that focus would now be on staycations and domestic tourism.

Councillor Price wished to mention the Job Club that was run on Wednesdays between 12pm and 1pm by Abri. This was for all residents and was not just exclusively for Abri clients and she wanted this to get as much publicity as possible.

Ed Wilson thanked the Chairman for placing the report onto the agenda. He said that the future was bright for Windsor and that plans looked very promising. He asked what new things would be coming to Windsor within the next 6 months and who within the Council was setting the economic direction moving forward for Windsor.

The Chairman said that she was the Cabinet Member for Business and that she worked closely with the economic growth team, along with Councillor Johnson, who was Cabinet Member for economic growth. They worked very closely together but also with businesses, to drive demand and success in Windsor. Steph James added that both Paul Roach and Robyn Bunyan, Maidenhead Town Manger were also a part of the team, along with the museum

team. She added that there was a big opportunity to bounce back from the pandemic and improve Windsor for the long run.

Claire Milne said that things in Windsor were looking very positive. The only thing that brought some concern to her was the limited inclusion of residents in the Windsor Yards consultation. She asked if there was another way for residents to be informed and contribute outside of the 2 consultation events. She also said in relation to the vision for Windsor, that residents' voices were very important and that they needed to be heard very early on to really have the best effect.

The Chairman agreed with this and said that the Prince's Foundation work was going onto their website the week that followed the forum and that a workshop would hopefully occur in September 2022. Windsor Yards could be contacted via their email address, which was available via the link that was provided by Paul Roach earlier in the meeting. Steph James said that the Prince's Foundation were very keen to engage with residents and the broader business community going forward.

Councillor Price raised some concerns over the Prince's Foundation work and the Windsor Vision, not running parallel. She said that some areas could have already become determined, due to the ill timing. The Chairman said that they were both separate and that both were engaging with each other to understand what each was attempting to achieve. The final documentation for the Windsor Vision was expected to be finalised in early 2023.

Councillor Davey asked the Chairman if she could ask Windsor Yards to host another consultation event in the Dedworth area on the back of Claire's comments. The Chairman said that they were an external company, and that this decision was down to them and not the Council.

Councillor Bowden said that if West Windsor was to have extra consultation meetings, what would happen to the residents in Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury. These residents also frequented Windsor and may ask also for a consultation event. Councillor Davey replied and said that he was simply standing up for the views of his residents in Dedworth.

The Chairman thanked Steph James, Saloni Radia and Julia White for their report and their attendance.

WINDSOR CONSULTATIONS

The forum noted the consultations including the A308 improvement works.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman asked Oran Norris-Browne, Democratic Services Officer, what was currently on the work programme for the forum. Oran Norris-Browne informed the forum members that he had included an extra column under the items not yet programmed section that was titled 'Comments from Officers'. This informed members, what officers had said about each suggestion when it was presented to them. It was clear that some items were not deemed suitable for the forum to consider, and perhaps required a more borough-wide focus.

Oran Norris-Browne said that the two items that were currently listed as potential topics for the next meeting were an update on the Windsor Homeless Project and an update on the Solar Together Project.

The Chairman suggested that the standing items that currently existed, which included the town manager update and the police update, were made into alternative items at every other meeting instead. She asked the forum members their thoughts on this proposal.

Councillor Tisi agreed with this proposal. She also endorsed the idea to have an update on the Windsor Homeless Project and encouraged attendance from a member of the project rather than have an update from a Council officer. The Chairman agreed to this.

ACTION: Windsor Homeless Project to be added to the next agenda.

Councillor Price asked what was happening with the air pollution item that had been placed on the work programme. Oran Norris-Browne said that officer comments suggested that this item would be more suitable for an Overview & Scrutiny panel, where a borough-wide focus could be pursued.

Councillor Price then asked about the presentation that had been given to Maidenhead Town Forum on 11 July 2022 about tennis courts and how they would operate going forward. She asked if this would apply to Windsor also. Oran Norris-Browne confirmed that he would speak to Councillor Price offline regarding this.

ACTION: Oran Norris-Browne to contact Councillor Price offline about the tennis courts.

Ed Wilson suggested an update on Victoria Street car park and also the bridge by the railway station. The Chairman said that there was no update to currently give on Victoria Street car park, and therefore it would not be added to the work programme.

In relation to the bridge, the Chairman said that there was £200,000 left in the capital budget and after surveying the bridge, no immediate issues were identified. A time to commence the works was still being looked at, and it would not be over the summer months due to the tourism trade.

Claire Milne asked for a review of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds and how they would be spent. She also asked for a focus on affordable housing.

Councillor Hilton said that the Council needed to work out how to separate different sums of money that related to specific areas. This was a work in progress, and it was a massive piece of work for the Council to undertake.

The Chairman said that affordable housing would be better suited to an Overview & Scrutiny panel, as it was borough-wide focus.

Councillor Bowden said that works on Victoria Street car park were subject to agreements with contractors. The forum may have an update on bridge works by the time the forum meets in September 2022, depending on if works had commenced by that time.

Councillor Baldwin thanked Claire Milne for her attendance at a meeting in Maidenhead and the presentation that she gave. He said that the Place Overview & Scrutiny panel would be taking the issue of CIL forward and that this was currently in progress.

Councillor Price asked if forum members could view the constitution and see what areas the forum could look at going forward, that has not been looked at before. She also discussed the idea of the forum making decisions and spending money as delegated by the cabinet. The Chairman acknowledged Councillor Price's request.

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman then discussed the possibility of hosting the forum in-person going forward, as opposed to having it held virtually online. She explained that Full Council had agreed to have the forum virtually bar one in-person meeting per municipal year. To reverse this, upon Oran

Norris-Browne's advice, it was advised that a named vote should be taken, and the decision would have to be unanimously in favour. Oran Norris-Browne confirmed this.

Councillor Davey asked if the meeting could be held at the Guildhall in Windsor going forward. The Chairman confirmed that this was not possible as the Guildhall was not accessible to persons with disabilities and accessibility issues. Meetings would be held at York House in Windsor if agreed.

Councillor Price said that she was not prepared to make a decision during the meeting due to the rising cases of Covid-19, amongst other factors. The Chairman agreed that the decision could be made offline.

Oran Norris-Browne reminded the forum that he had communicated this to members recently via email and that if the decision was to be taken offline, he implored members to provide him with a simple for or against on the decision.

Councillor Tisi asked if the option existed for the meeting to be sometimes in-person and sometimes virtual. The Chairman confirmed this. Oran Norris-Browne then reminded members that there was currently one meeting per municipal year that was held in-person already and the current plan was to hold this in November. However, the possibility existed that this could be changed.

The forum then noted the dates for the future meetings.

The meeting, which began at 6.33 pm, finished at 8.35 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....