

## PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY 25 JANUARY 2023

Present: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Gerry Clark, Maureen Hunt, Sayonara Luxton, Shamsul Shelim, Leo Walters, Joshua Reynolds, Mandy Brar, Gurch Singh and Jon Davey

Present virtually: Councillor Helen Taylor (Vice-Chairman)

Also in Part I attendance: Parish Councillor Pat McDonald (Co-Optee), and Councillors Gurpreet Bhangra and Phil Haseler

Also in Part I attendance virtually: Councillors Donna Stimson, Karen Davies and David Coppinger

Officers: Laurence Ellis, Alysse Strachan, Adele Taylor and Andrew Durrant

Officers in attendance virtually: Chris Joyce and Adrien Waite

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillor Jones. He was substituted by Councillor Clark.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest received.

### MINUTES

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held 9 January 2023 were a true and accurate record.**

#### Draft Budget 2023/24 - Place Items

Andrew Durrant, Executive Director of Place Services, gave a presentation on highlighting the budget of 2023/24 relating to Place Overview and Scrutiny. He explained that the report presented pressures and mitigating savings to enable the Council to balance its budget in 2023/24. It was understood that there would be financial challenges, including the recovery from the Covid pandemic, high inflation, increasing interest rates and demographic growth all impacting on the Borough's residents. This also had an impact on both the Borough's revenue costs and capital costs (cost of borrowing).

Andrew Durrant also noted that RBWM had a low council tax rate which was more acute in comparison to other local councils, also low budget levels (although building these back).

Andrew Durrant also mentioned that there were in-year budget pressures (partially caused by Covid). In response, he stated that he was working with Heads of Service and teams to mitigate these pressures.

Andrew Durrant also pointed out that approximately over 80% of funding from Council Tax was spent on approximately over 80% on individual services.

Andrew Durrant then informed that there was a government funding announcement which included:

- Council Tax policy (3 +2) % (1% increase = approx. £830,000)
- New social care grants.
- One more year of New Homes Bonus (but no legacy payments)
- Consolidation of a number of grants
- Reductions in services grant to fund some of other commitments

This meant that RBWM was in an improved position with additional funding over and above what was included in current draft budget. Looking forward, Andrew Durrant stated that reserve levels would be reviewed as well as prepare for future challenges.

Andrew Durrant then discussed the Place Service Budget setting approach. In terms of approach to resource prioritisation, these included

- Taking a strategic and collaborative view across Place Service in 3-5 years
- Maintaining essential and statutory services (underpinned by 'quality')
- Prioritise in setting the Corporate Plan goals
- Focus on Strategic Placemaking and Economic Growth
- Opportunities to promote Health and Wellbeing (e.g. Active Travel and enhancing facilities)
- Partnership delivery models key and area to explore
- Areas to maximise commercial activity and income generation opportunities
- Address system failure, improve process and unblock issues

Andrew Durrant then raised some financial risks and issues:

- Place Change Programme presented opportunities but also some challenges
- Historic contracts and renewals
- Post-pandemic behavioural change and recovery (e.g. Covid grant reduction)
- Economic outlook

Andrew Durrant then explained other opportunities which were being explored. These included the Berkshire Deal to open up new funding opportunities, better alignment of services and leadership with Corporate Plan Priorities, and strategic relationships with business and growth sector organisations.

Andrew Durrant then discussed the Place Service savings (accounting for £1.943 million) and growth (accounting for £1.731 million) from various sections.

In response to Councillor Singh wishing to have a copy of the slides, Andrew Durrant mentioned that he could circulate the slides to panel members after the meeting.

To conclude, Andrew Durrant then displayed the key dates:

- Online Engagement (launched on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022) had closed on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023.
- Cabinet to consider engagement feedback and propose budget on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023.
- Full Council to discuss the budget on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023

With agreement from the panel, the Chairman invited the public speaker to address the panel. They had three minutes to do so.

Mr Hinton stated that he was speaking on behalf of the RBWM Climate Emergency Coalition. While it was acknowledged that the Council was experiencing increasing costs and needed to budget accordingly, he argued that this was not the time to reduce the overall budget made available to deliver upon the commitments set out in the Council's own Environment and Climate Strategy, and the Corporate Plan's priority to tackle climate change and its consequences. He stated the Council is behind schedule with 3 of its 4 key Environment and

Climate change objectives and with fully establishing the Climate Partnership. Therefore, he conveyed, there was a very strong argument for investment and acceleration.

Mr Hinton said that the Council were only considering the obvious climate related budget items, rather than the impact each budget item had on the climate and/or environment. For example, in recruitment, what provisions will be made to reduce emissions associated with the position through home working and/or use of public transport?

Regarding the draft budget, Mr Hinton stated that the proposed budget would reduce £180,000 in spending on delivering on its Environment and Climate Strategy, whereby funding would come from the carbon offsetting and biodiversity net gain fund (s106 payments). The s106 payments were meant to remedy damage caused by development, and were in addition to, not instead of, projects delivered through the Climate Partnership and/or the Council.

Mr Hinton concluded by asking the Panel what they had done to secure additional powers and resources from government to avoid a significant overall reduction in funds allocated to one of the Council's top three priorities.

Chris Joyce, Head of Infrastructure Sustainability and Economic Growth, stated that the Council was on track to meet its commitments relating to its own emissions, but also admitted that there were some challenges around meeting targets for the overall Borough emissions. He also stated that there were no reductions on the amount of money going into projects and teams in the budget proposals. Regarding external funding and money from government, there had been some success in acquiring £4-5 million to help the Council deliver on its climate commitments.

Chris Joyce then explained that, rather than being seen as a cut, he was making best use of the grant funding the Council had to grow the team and ensure that they had the right resources to deliver its objectives.

Andrew Durrant added that he and his team were working with its contract operators to look into carbon reduction as well as investigating and trialling methods in reducing environmental harm, such as road works. In addition, future contracts would have requirements on environmental friendliness.

*(Councillor Brar entered the meeting at 6:10pm)*

In terms of staff, Andrew Durrant explained that flexible and agile working would continue as well as looked into further. He also added that public transport would be further promoted.

Referring to the Climate Partnership funding (PLA17S in the report), where there was a proposed £100,000 saving and the finance was to be derived from the Carbon Offsetting, Biodiversity fund and S106 payments, Councillor Reynolds asked if these funds were already in place to replace funding directly. Andrew Durrant confirmed this.

Councillor Reynolds then asked if S106 payments would limit the amount of funds for other projects. Chris Joyce replied that the Carbon Offsetting fund was a s106 Payment fund, collected to reduce carbon emissions in the Borough. He also stated that the commitment to give £250,000 to climate partnership for three years would continue.

Councillor Reynolds then asked if this meant there were specific project limitations on that funding or would that funding be able to be used in anyway as per the original planned partnership funding. Chris Joyce replied that this was based on the business plan with the Climate Partnership Board. He stated that the funding was very much used for the intended purpose.

Regarding the Climate Partnership Fund and the money being used from s106 payments, Councillor Reynolds then asked if residents would not expect s106 payments to be spent on

projects rather than running the Climate Partnership. Chris Joyce replied that he had worked with the Climate Partnership Board to identify their business plan for the next 3 years in terms of funding. The Carbon Offsetting fund (part of the s106 payments) would only fund projects rather than the general running of the Climate Partnership. There was nothing preventing investing in more projects which reduce carbon emissions across the Borough identified with the Climate Partnership.

The Panel then discussed the Draft Budget 2023/24 items that fall under the Place Directorate by going through the list of budget items in the report.

The Panel discussed Line-by-Line Review (PLA01S).

Councillor Walters asked if rising interest rates had been factored in. Adele Taylor, Executive Director of Resources, replied that had interest rates and inflations had been factored in the overall draft budget in the medium term.

Councillor Hunt asked why there was a high saving for a Line-by-Line Review. Andrew Durrant replied that this was made up of a variety of different aspects. Having had a look at some consultancy costs, some of these had been removed for the next financial year as consultancy costs were usually large but often one-off. The Place Directorate had looked into how this could be invested within the organisation, such as project management support. Adele Taylor explained that the Line-by-Line Review was annual exercise because there were usually changes for next year's budget. She added that the biggest change to Line-by-Line savings for the draft budget was the National Insurance (NI) changes, whereby employers and employees were to be charged additional Health and Social care NI, but this was no longer required. Thus, this was removed from every Directorate budget in 2023-24.

Councillor Davey commented that the Line-by-Line lacked detailed information in the report and stated that he was better informed during a meeting with officers in which he shadowed. He asked if there could be an informal meeting before the Place O&S meeting so that Panel members could be better informed on items in future. Adele Taylor replied that the Line-by-Line Review was hundreds of pages long due to having to go through every cost centre and account code.

Councillor Singh asked how much of £376,000 would go to staff public transport as there appeared to be a reduction. Adele Taylor replied that the sections (including staff public transport) under the £376,000 funding were areas where there had been a budget but there had been no spending over a number of years. She explained that there was a reduction in staff public transport was because of factors like changes such as more online meetings.

The Panel then moved onto discussing PLA02S (Infrastructure, Sustainability and Transport). Councillor Reynolds asked if there was a guarantee that in-house teams would be successfully recruited as well as why there was a struggle to recruit them. Chris Joyce replied that the recently recruited Highways Development Control Officer had recently started. He added that the reason that recruitment had not been done before was because the previous Transport and Infrastructure Team was originally an outsourced service and therefore it was being paid through a contract. By bringing the Team in-house, some money was able to be saved.

Councillor Walters asked if recruitment for an in-house team would result in the curtailment of employing individuals outside of the Council. Andrew Durrant replied that it would not. He elaborated that the Place Directorate may have a different approach with contracts going forward, such as looking at different functions that were currently within contracted services transiting into in-house in the future, and therefore, providing some additional resource within the service teams directly rather than being within contracted teams.

On PLA03S (Public Transport Subsidies), Councillor Brar asked why the S106 contribution was a one-off. Adele Taylor replied that the sum of money was only received once and

therefore it could only be spent once. She explained that the sum of money would go in for one year and then get reversed back out in the following year because it was a one-off grant.

Councillor Davey asked if Public Transport Subsidies was a special project that was being funded out of S106 funding or a standard service which was being funded out of S106 funding. Chris Joyce replied that S106 funding was financing the services that RBWM were currently supporting but the alternative choice was to reduce the service and then refund the service using section 106. In effect, if this money was not put into the budget, then RBWM would then fund a lesser public transport service; but then the following day, RBWM would then put section 106 to restart up one of the bus services it supported.

Councillor Davey believed that S106 was for when there was an expansion and services were needed to support this. Therefore, he asked if there were issues with an existing service, would RBWM need to look into that service. Chris Joyce replied that the Transport Team were doing and that this was helping to maintain services for people whilst the Team undertake the more detailed review.

The Panel had no questions or comments for PLA4S (Sustainability team projects) and PLA5S (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace income). The Panel then discussed PLA06S (Operational changes in parks).

Councillor Reynolds had some concerns over the closure of park gates and the suggestion of utilising volunteers. He asked if there had been considerations on the potential saving from this proposal being balanced against potential expenditure in the future resulting from and social behaviour vandalism, such as replanting trees which vandals had damaged. He also asked if the parks referred to in the report included cemeteries. Alysse Strachan, Head of Neighbourhood Services, confirmed that the balance of costs was considered. She added that it would not be all parks, and that there would be a place-by-place consideration whereby key parks which had a high volume of anti-social behaviour would be looked into. This would be done through a risk assessment with partners, such as Thames Valley Police. She also confirmed that this may also include the closing of cemetery gates.

Councillor Singh had some concerns on the provision of public conveniences (public toilet) and asked if an EQIA assessment had taken place as some public toilets had been removed. Alysse Strachan replied that a full-scale review of all public toilets in the Borough (rather than just in parks) would take place. She confirmed that an EQIA assessment had been completed but this would be updated as the project progressed in case there were any alternative options, such as parishes or other partners which may take on operational use of public conveniences. Therefore, this may not involve the removal of public toilets or charging for them.

The Panel then discussed the budget items relating to parking: PLA07S (Review of parking enforcement near schools), PLA08S (Parking Subsidies) and PLA09S (Charging opportunities for car parking). The Chairman declared some of these items would be discussed in Part II.

Councillor Reynolds requested to raise a point regarding PLA07S in Part II of the meeting. The Chairman accepted this.

On saving £67,000 for parking subsidies, Councillor Davey asked what these subsidies were or whether this was generic subsidies. Alysse Strachan replied this was made up of various subsidies that RBWM provided for parking across the Borough. A large chunk of parking subsidies was the free Christmas parking for residents, costing around £50,000 per year to deliver. The alternative arrangement introduced this year where public transport provision was made in conjunction with the resident's parking discount had proved successful. The introduction of the resident discount scheme meant there was a negated need for this because residents could access free parking in the town centres. In addition, RBWM sometimes received requests from event organisers and therefore provide subsidised parking

for events. The event organisers will be advised that they need to factor in parking costs into their plans.

On PLA09S, Councillor Singh asked if free parking on Sundays had been dropped. Adele Taylor replied this report was a draft budget and that Cabinet may make some changes before the final budget. At that stage, this was still in draft budget. In response, Councillor Singh then asked if there were any financial calculation in terms of budgetary arrangements on this direction. Adele Taylor replied that the draft budget to be sent to Cabinet would have full financial implications in it. She added that any changes Cabinet would potentially make would have to be fully costed and the draft budget would have to be fully balanced.

The Panel then moved onto PLA10S (Cashless Parking expansion). Parish Councillor Pat McDonald, Co-Optee, was reluctant about the use of cashless parking and asked if cash parking could continue in Maidenhead.

Councillor Reynolds asked if there was any additional cost with RingGo to the Council. Alysse Strachan replied that any costs were offset by the maintenance the Council had to pay for the maintenance of pay and display machines as well as facilitate cash collections.

Councillor Walters supported the idea of retaining cash parking due to an ageing population in the Borough and asked if this could be retained. Alysse Strachan responded that trends were showing that more people were taking up the cashless option which was why the Borough was moving in this direction. Though, with EQI element, cash parking still needed to be considered with different groups of people and the preference in payment method. She also stated that the cash parking option would not be fully removed and were looking at different options. Councillor Davey commented that EQI assessment did mention elderly people and therefore payment preferences for certain people had to be considered.

Councillor Reynolds asked if there was a proposal to remove parking machines from some of car parks and would that leave any of current car parks with no parking machines. Alysse Strachan said this could be a potential; but this would be a location-by-location basis whereby a couple of machines would be retained if there was no cash payment option nearby for residents. Though there was already a program of removing pay-and-display machines across the Borough.

Moving onto PLA11S (Income opportunities across Neighbourhood Services), Councillor Brar asked if the pavement licencing and cleansing and valeting services (as mentioned in the item) was going ahead. Alysse Strachan advised the project had not started yet because approval to go forward with this was pending; but any commercial opportunities with the assets that the Borough had were being looked at. Councillor Brar asked if residents were being consulted on this. Alysse Strachan said that there would be a wide range of consultations.

Councillor Luxton asked how the Council received money from, for example, private car washers, such as would a fee be charged. Alysse Strachan replied that this was in development, but it may be in the form of a concession contract in which the Council would charge a management fee or receive a percentage of the income.

Councillor Reynolds asked for reassurance that management enforcement would not involve enforcement such as management officers penalising children for a lemonade stand or a jumble sale. Alysse Strachan reassured this would not happen. Councillor Reynolds later followed up by asking what safeguards were put in place to ensure that young enterprising people were not being penalised as well as the grey area on what would be considered acceptable and unacceptable. Andrew Durrant acknowledged that there could be pitfalls and that the approach to the program would need to be considered before being introduced.

Regarding licences for private trainers using parks, Councillor Singh asked if this encompassed organised exercises and events and thus the individuals arranging this would be charged. Andrew Durrant replied that this was one of several areas that was listed and

identified to achieve the £50,000 worth of savings that the Place Service were committed to. An approach he suggested for the Council was to work more in partnership with the likes of personal trainers to see, for example, if there could be discounted concessions or to continue their free but commercial activity in exchange for some free to access community-led provision in which RBWM could then expand its activity program and health and wellbeing program. Andrew Durrant also stated that while the Council should consider the licensing arrangements for those individuals going forward, it should also equally and ideally engage and work with individuals which were providing activity in public spaces and to see how it could work with them to allow them to continue but to benefit the wider community.

Councillor Brar asked if the boat hire in Maidenhead through concession contract was related to the Maidenhead waterways or the River Thames. Alysse Strachan reiterated that she was looking at all the assets that the Borough possessed as well as the commercial opportunities that it could explore.

The Panel moved onto PLA12S (Waste operational changes). Councillor Shelim asked what was meant by waste transfer station opening times, such as whether this meant shorter opening times. Alysse Strachan confirmed this, explaining that there were different summer and winter opening hours. As such, RBWM had been looking at the option to have its winter opening hours reflected in the summer opening hours, in which they would be open for shorter. Despite this, as part of that work, RBWM would do investigations on the demand on when residents would want to use the tip.

Councillor Luxton asked what was meant by 're-use "shop"'. Alysse Strachan explained that sometime residents bring items to the tip which can be reused. Therefore, the staff on site would look to see what items were reusable, like bikes or chairs, they collect that equipment and then sell them to other residents who visited the site.

Councillor Singh asked if upcycling shops were considered which could be placed in the town centre as well as how the staffing and management would be organised. Alysse Strachan responded that some details were yet to be decided, but she was open to pop-up shops. If this had potential successful, then these suggestions could be explored.

Moving onto PLA13S (Place Service Transformation Programme), Councillor Walters asked what this meant. Andrew Durrant explained that it was intended in the long-term to achieve a better alignment of the services in recent times, functions and staffing resource across the Place Service. Some of these changes included the creation of Neighbourhood Services, with a realignment of some functions, and Chris Joyce's Infrastructure Sustainability and Economic Growth Service. Collectively, the directorate leadership team had identified aspects where the Place Service could be more effective in its contract management as well as where it could deliver higher quality of standard to RBWM residents. It was often about identifying areas of real expertise and specialism that could be better aligned and avoid any fragmentation. It was hoped that this would promote efficiency and reductions in costs.

Councillor Davey asked if the contract work was being done by the Legal Team. Andrew Durrant replied that while the Legal Team was separate from the Place Service, they provide legal support in re-procurement of contracts alongside separate financial and HR support from other teams or services.

The Panel then discussed PLA14S (Contract efficiencies). Councillor Brar asked if there was an attempt to bring the services mentioned (Highways, Waste Disposal, Parking enforcement, grounds maintenance) in-house. Alysse Strachan replied that it was not an objective to bring all the services in-house, though potentially with some of them. For example, the re-procuring of highways contracts potentially had elements which may be better delivered in-house.

The Panel moved onto PLA15S (Parish council & Commercial Partnership). Councillor Luxton asked if the Borough Council controlled the flow of money to Parish Councils as well as what it was being spent on. Adele Taylor replied that the parish precepts were for Parish Councils

and the Borough collected and delivered this to the Councils on their behalf as part of the Council tax collection. As Parish Councils were their own separate and sovereign bodies, the Borough Council had no control over where this money was spent. Unlike RBWM, which had a referendum limit of 4.99% on Council tax, Parish Councils were not limited by this. Another difference was that there was an un-parish element, which was limited to by the referendum limit, which covered costs in areas which were not under the jurisdiction of a Parish Council.

Councillor Brar asked if PLA15S was asking Parish Councils to take in services from the Borough. Andrew Durrant replied that this budget line was part of the Council looking into how to better work with parishes in the future. Through discussions with parishes, Andrew Durrant stated that there were potential opportunities and that some parishes were keen to have further discussion to ensure cooperation. In addition, commercial opportunities were also considered, such as supporting community service. Community wardens were also discussed with parishes.

Councillor Brar then asked if Borough funding would be provided for the services in which Parish Councils may take on. Andrew Durrant replied that this was still under consideration and discussion. In addition, there needed to be an analysis of the assets as well as the divisions of responsibility in the parishes to understand where the opportunities exist. One objective for the future was to ensure that officers were identified so they could do that type of work.

*(Councillor Clark left the meeting at 7:59pm)*

The Chairman asked if the Council knew Parish Councils individual reserves and a cumulative figure of their reserves. Adele Taylor reiterated that Parish Councils were their own separate sovereign bodies, and therefore it was up to them to determine what their reserves were.

The Panel then moved onto PLA16S (Economic Growth Team). Councillor Reynolds asked if town centre events (such as Christmas light switch on) were at risk with this budget line. Chris Joyce replied that most of those big events were financed through sponsorship and organised by partners, while the budget was for minor events which may be organised. Therefore, the events were not at risk. Coming back, Councillor Reynolds then asked what smaller events were at risk in not being arranged. Chris Joyce said he would need to come back to the question, but he reassured that major events like Christmas lights were not under threat.

Councillor Shelim asked for explanation regarding Guildhall and business rates in the budget line. Chris Joyce explained that the tourist information centre was previously based in the shopping centre and was paying rent and business rates. As part of the process to bring the tourist information centre into the Guildhall and share the space with the museum, the rent was taken out of the budget, and this had identified that there was also a business rate cost that had previously not appeared in the budget and now could because it was now within an RBWM building.

The Panel then discussed PLA17S (Climate Partnership funding). Councillor Reynolds asked if the budget would keep RBWM on its annual carbon budget and successfully achieve its annual carbon budget production. Chris Joyce replied that forecasts for the Council carbon emissions showed that it was on track to meet its target and there was nothing in the budget proposals which would make achieving these carbon targets harder. Though some other potential risks may exist, such as securing government funding.

In reference to a Table 3 (under 4.17: Development Contributions) in the report, Councillor Davey commented that there were no S106 and CIL contributions for biodiversity, despite biodiversity being discussed. Chris Joyce stated this did not mean there would not be any spending on biodiversity. The table was referring to the fact that there was no S106 contributions to biodiversity at the moment, though S106 contributions may be collected to support biodiversity in future.



The Panel then moved onto PLA18S (Planning Performance Agreements). Councillor Reynolds asked for an elaboration on the budget line. Adrien Waite, Head of Planning, explained that a planning performance agreement was when RBWM entered into an agreement with a developer to process a free application advice or a planning application to try and meet particular time scales. These were often associated with funding agreements which RBWM negotiate on a on a bespoke basis. They could provide extra resource such as specialist external consultants or contract planners. As part of the budget, the Planning Team was looking to change some of its pre-application charging structure but there were also a lot of larger developments in the pipeline due to the adoption of the Borough Local Plan. Overall, this budget line was highlighting that there was the opportunity for more discussions with developers particularly on larger sites and to try and increase revenue to fund those activities.

Councillor Reynolds responded that this sounded like a “planning application fast lane” in which developers could grant RBWM extra cash to get applications through quicker. Adrien Waite responded that this was not the case, explaining that this did not change how planning applications were handled. Rather, this changed how it would be dealt with and the way it would be funded as well as bring in additional resources. He also explained that these planning performance agreements would mostly be used for larger developments.

Councillor Reynold was still sceptical with the idea. Adele Taylor stated that planning performance agreements were used in multiple local authorities. She stated that these agreements were to ensure the right skills and resources were acquired in a timely manner when doing planning applications. She stated that this was supporting the efficient use of RBWM resources for individual applications and minor applications by utilising funding like this to support major ones. This was about individuals who would pay for the increase in use of resources.

The Panel had no comments or questions on PLA19S (Planning Application fee), PLA01G (Leisure Centre rent concession income) and PLA02G Public transport subsidies

On PLA03G (Tree Maintenance and Inspections), Councillor Davey asked if the full year impact of £454,000 in the budget line encompassed tree planting by the Tree Team or whether it included tree maintenance. Andrew Durrant replied that this encompassed tree inspection and maintenance and not the re-planting of trees, though tree planting schemes had been investigated. He added that there had been increased pressures relating to trees, such fallen trees caused by extreme weather.

The Panel had no comments on PLA04G (Section 81 works extra resource) and PLA05G (Highways and Streetworks software).

On PLA06G (Parking Income season tickets), in reference to Table 6: Fees and Charges Income in the report, Councillor Davey asked for an explanation for the income growth from £10.3 million to £11.5 million. Adele Taylor explained that the table illustrated the totality of the income and that the overall income budget for parking services would be £11.5 million (an 11.6% average increase). She also added that the table reflected the changing demand and behaviour in certain areas.

The Panel had no comments regarding PLA07G (Car Parks).

On PLA08G (Fly Tipping), Councillor Davey asked if there was an organisation who would be providing most of the funding. Alysse Strachan replied that the existing contract which RBWM had underestimated the volume of fly tipping in the Borough, therefore the Borough had to pay for anything above the threshold.

The Panel had no comments regarding PLA09G (Tivoli Contract) and PLA10G (Burials income reversal).

Councillor Davey requested to look at different approach on discussing the budget items, arguing that discussing the items in a less formal chat would give Panel members a chance to discuss and ask questions. Adele Taylor replied that the budget process was made extremely difficult due to a tight timescale from central government; namely late notification of information and policy decisions from central government which therefore caused work around balancing budget to be done right up until the draft budget was to be presented to Cabinet. She added that if it were not for the restrictions from central government, then RBWM officers could have looked at different ways to brief councillors.

Adele Taylor also stated that a review would be arranged on how things could be done differently. She also explained that it was the remit of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel to consider the budget because the budget should not have been separated into single elements because it was about the totality of the funding, elaborating that if the budget was viewed separately, the budget as a whole would not be reviewed. They could however involve other panels but it was their remit to consider the whole budget.

The Panel had no recommendations to Cabinet. Therefore, the Panel moved the meeting into Part II.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the motion to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting be approved.**

After some discussion on the nature of the proposals in Part II, two motions were proposed.

Councillor Luxton proposed the motion that Cabinet explore all the schools in the Borough which require funding for school crossing patrols (SCPs). This was seconded by Councillor Shelim.

A named vote was taken.

<b>That Cabinet explore all the schools in the Borough which require funding for school crossing patrols (SCPs). (Motion)</b>	
Councillor John Bowden	For
Councillor Gerry Clark	No vote recorded
Councillor Maureen Hunt	For
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	For
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	For
Councillor Leo Walters	For
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	Against
Councillor Mandy Brar	Abstain
Councillor Gurch Singh	Against
Councillor Jon Davey	Abstain
<b>Carried</b>	

The result was 5 in favour, 2 against and 2 abstain, so the motion passed.

**AGREED: That Cabinet explore all the schools in the Borough which require funding for school crossing patrols (SCPs).**

Councillor Reynolds proposed the motion that Cabinet review budget line PLA07S (Review of parking enforcement near schools). This was seconded by Councillor Singh.

<b>That Cabinet review budget line PLA07S (Review of parking enforcement near schools) (Motion)</b>	
Councillor John Bowden	Against
Councillor Gerry Clark	No vote recorded
Councillor Maureen Hunt	Against

Councillor Sayonara Luxton	Against
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	Against
Councillor Leo Walters	Against
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	For
Councillor Mandy Brar	For
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Jon Davey	For
<b>Rejected</b>	

The result was 5 against and 4 in favour, so the motion fell.

The meeting, which began at 5.35 pm, finished at 9.22 pm

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

## PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday 31 January 2023

Present: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Greg Jones, Maureen Hunt, Sayonara Luxton, Shamsul Shelim, Leo Walters, Catherine Del Campo, Mandy Brar, Gurch Singh and Jon Davey

Also in attendance: Councillor David Cannon, Councillor Phil Haseler, Councillor Samantha Rayner and Councillor Andrew Johnson

Also in attendance virtually: Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra, Councillor Donna Stimson, Councillor David Hilton and Councillor Ewan Larcombe

Officers: Oran Norris-Browne, Alysse Strachan, Andrew Durrant and Andy Aldridge

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Taylor & Reynolds and also Co-Optee Parish Councillor Pat McDonald. Councillor Del Campo substituted for Councillor Reynolds.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

### Thames Valley Police Annual Presentation

The Chairman began by informing the panel that he had decided to change the order of the agenda items, where the Thames Valley Police would give their presentation first, followed by the Youth Council.

**AGREED: That the order of the agenda be altered as per the above.**

The panel considered a verbal presentation from members of the Thames Valley Police that was provided by John Campbell, Chief Constable, John Groenen, Detective Chief Inspector, Clare Knibbs, LPA Commander & also Matthew Barber, Police & Crime Commissioner.

John Campbell began by providing the panel with a brief overview of the Thames Valley Police in numbers. He stated that they were the largest non-metropolitan force in England and Wales, which covered 2,200 square miles over 3 different counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire. This area had a population of 2.5 million, with in excess of 6 million annual visitors. He then outlined key members of his management team within Thames Valley.

John Campbell said that within Thames Valley, there were 4861 Police Officers, 3384 Police staff, 288 PCSO's, 229 Special Constables, plus many volunteers, cadets, and even mini police. This data was correct as of October 2022 and included regional units of counter terrorism policing in the South East. He said that as part of an uplift programme, they were working hard towards building a workforce that reflected its communities. They received more than 1,600 police officer applications in 2022. 147 of recruits were from a Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic background and 594 of the recruits were also female.

John Campbell then noted that a lot of what people heard about the police were the negative things and the things that they did not do. He however wanted to share with the panel, all of the things which the police had done. From 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 there were

497,857 contacts made by the public. Of which, 90,339 incidents were attended too with 15,099 arrests being made. 2,400 drug dealing and possession crimes were recorded, with 1844 drug possession arrests being made.

John Campbell made note that domestic abuse formal action was up 44%, which although it was negative thing, the statistic was positive as it showed that more people were being encouraged to actually report this. Rape, sexual offences, stalking & harassment, and the number of crimes resulting in formal action being taken were all also up from the same point last year. 4,205 road collisions were attended, 3,319 missing persons were found, and 319 different events were policed by Thames Valley Police. Mental health distress was also a major thing that was impacting modern society too, and 810 people who were experiencing this were attended too.

People could also now be arrested under the Mental Health Act if they proved a danger to themselves or others. Unfortunately, 800 sudden deaths were also attended too by Thames Valley Police, which in turn meant officers had to deliver news to families of the deceased. 658 reported crimes of assault against officers also occurred in that period alone.

John Campbell then outlined a few other highlights of Thames Valley Police. These were as followed:

- National rollout of Project Vigilant.
- Accredited organisation of White Ribbon.
- Menopause Friendly Accreditation.
- Awarded Trailblazer Status.
- DBS – Outstanding Status.
- Top 5 forces for Firearms Licensing.

John Campbell then discussed Operation London Bridge. He said that he had to draft in police from other areas such as Milton Keynes, as the events in Windsor were unique ones, and ones in which Thames Valley Police were very proud to police.

John Groenen then outlined some key statistics within Windsor & Maidenhead specifically in the last 9 months. These were as followed:

- 7,892 reports of crime – 3% increase.
- 1,254 reports of domestic abuse – 5.2% increase.
- 858 reports of vehicle crime – 39% increase.
- 781 reports of violence with injury – 2% decrease.
- 28 knife enable crimes – 15% decrease.
- 211 sexual offences – 27% increase.
- 26 rapes – 18% increase.

The LPA's key priorities were to prevent violence against women & girls, violence against the person and victim engagement and satisfaction. The challenges were to increase community engagement. These included things such as Thames Valley Alerts, the strategic leaders monthly meeting, a review and refresh of neighbourhood engagement plans and a focus on events with the greatest possible engagement opportunities.

John Groenen then discussed knife crime, and specifically the week between 11 and 18 November 2022. Four knife amnesty bins were put out in Windsor & Maidenhead, where 118 knives were recovered overall. 134 were recovered across the whole of Berkshire including that 118. There were 6 different stop checks of habitual knife carriers and 3 arrests were made for aggravated burglary. Numerous knife crime inputs to schools were made and information was provided to children, who in turn would have distributed this to parents.

Councillor Greg Jones said that one of his residents was mugged last Saturday night. He asked if it would not be beneficial for more foot patrols to be seen at both day and night to prevent this happening. John Groenen said that a meeting was held every 2 weeks where all

intelligence was fed into, and if it was apparent that Maidenhead was a constant issue for crime, then this is where they would task their officers. They would follow the data.

Councillor Greg Jones said that a lot of shops in the town centre would perhaps not report the crimes, and therefore it would not be brought up within the fortnightly meeting. John Campbell said that shoplifting levels had increased, and he also stated that he was a big advocate for the physical presence of officers on the street. However, there was a fine balance between doing this and having officers at the ready on call in vehicles. Clare Knibbs added that they had just set up an assessment and investigative unit in Berkshire, where the CCTV could be livestreamed straight to the office. The implications may not be visibly seen; however, patterns of offending were occurring in the background leading to a better service overall.

Councillor Walters said that the issue of travellers had been omitted from the presentation. He said that he had seen a decrease of their presence in the last year and wondered why this could perhaps be. John Campbell said that the local community often did not like the traveller community entering into their own communities, however sometimes people did not even raise an eyebrow to it. He added that there had now been a change in legislation, which gave the police more power to intervene in significant issues. These new powers had been used on a number of occasions. Resources across the force could then be used to enforce both the old and new legislation. Transit sites could be used to move the travelling community on from one location to the site, however local authorities were not too keen on the ideas of these transit sites.

Councillor Brar asked what the outcome was of the street light survey from around a year ago and how they were liaising with the Council on it. John Campbell said that they would look into this and provide a written response to Councillor Brar offline.

**ACTION: TVP to provide Councillor Brar with a written response to her question on the results of the street lighting survey offline.**

Councillor Davey said that he had an idea for the Council, the police, and the community wardens. He said that he believed that the Council currently collected the funds for the police to the tune of around £17 million per year. He said that if the police gave some of that money back to the Council and ring-fenced it to police activities, £3 million could fund 60 new community wardens and PCSO's. He said that this would provide a very safe environment to the community. John Campbell agreed with the principle of increasing police presence, however said that the money was used for many officers who were investigating offences behind closed doors such as online crimes.

Councillor Del Campo said that she had cause to use the 101 service recently and it had taken her around 30 minutes. She compared it to the current struggles of the NHS. She said that some communication around how to get people to the right place could be beneficial to aid waiting times. John Campbell agreed and said that the current average waiting time for 101 was around 4 minutes. Averages did change and one day it was 1 minute 20 seconds and 1 was just 50 seconds, so it varied. He admitted that they were not currently getting it right for some people, however for some people it was working fine. They wished for non-emergency situations to be filtered through the online website, if possible, but work needed to be done on this.

Councillor Singh said that officer numbers were comparatively very low to other authorities. He said that the stalking and harassment figures appeared to him as being a concern and asked why this had increased by 55%. He then spoke about bike thefts in Maidenhead town centre and if the cost-of-living crisis had seen any effects on petty thefts, and it leading onto more serious thefts due to the current economic state.

John Campbell said that compared to 3 years ago, the stats for burglaries were down 21%. With people working from home, this decreased the opportunities for burglaries to be committed. He added that a lot of harassment occurred online. A spike in vehicle thefts had

also been seen in recent times and he said that he would not be surprised if the cost-of-living crisis had seen an effect on this.

Councillor Singh then asked about crimes committed as a result of the night time economy and wished for police to be seen more often patrolling the town centre. He then mentioned about his concerns around a new car park opening at Stafferton Way, which could be accessed through dark narrow alley ways only accessible to the police on foot. John Campbell said that unfortunately poorly lit areas laid with the local authority and not with the police. Councillor Shelim thanked the police for their presentation and asked what the main reasons were for the police being stationed in certain places in Windsor to deal with the night time economy and if the weather affected crimes. John Campbell admitted that the police loved rain and agreed that the weather did indeed have an effect on policing. John Groenen said that he would feed back the comments to the night time economy group.

Matthew Barber said that he was looking to fund 80 additional officers and have them on the books by the end of the current financial year and additionally, that they would exceed their home office target. He admitted that there were lots of challenges that faced the police, which were not affected by visible foot patrols such as domestic violence and online sexual abuse. However, he also admitted that some indeed were affected by this. Now was the time to invest in community policing teams. He said that it was not all bad, but the bad things were what people would focus on. With regards to the discussions on the 101 service, £6 million extra would be needed to man phones, which would decrease waiting times, however this would be beyond the limits of Council tax levels.

Matthew Barber wished to enhance digital contact between the public and the police. He said that the modern day with online shopping showed that this worked and over the next 12 to 18 months, a new online system would hopefully be implemented to aid this 101 service. He thanked John Campbell for maintaining a good service during his time as the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police.

Councillor Davey asked if Matthew Barber was looking to take over the Council's CCTV system and if this would be purchased or merely handed over. Matthew Barber said that he proposed a Thames Valley wide network be created and be maintained and operated by Thames Valley Police. He wished to seek a contribution from local authorities moving forward, however noted that not all local authorities would want to sign up to this voluntary network. RBWM already had a good network of CCTV compared to some neighbouring authorities and therefore authorities such as Slough and Milton Keynes were being focussed on first.

Councillor Singh said that Maidenhead had struggled with community policing for some time and thanked Matthew Barber for his recruitment drive. He asked if officers had been poached by other police networks with an increase in pay being used as an incentive, as it was with the Metropolitan police. Matthew Barber said that thankfully it had not had the effect that was first feared but admitted that he could not ignore it. The South East allowance was increased to the maximum, but this did still not exceed the £5,000 offered by the Metropolitan police.

Councillor Brar asked about community policing and why the presence of officers in rural settings was practically non-existent. Matthew Barber said that there was rural crime task force, which was active in these areas. His desire was to see all local communities be adequately represented by officers.

The Chairman thanked all of the representatives from Thames valley Police for their presentation and their attendance.

### Street Lighting - Youth Council

The panel considered a written report on Street Lighting, which had been written by the Youth Council.

Holly Hannan, Chair of the Youth Council and Alexander Wood, Vice-Chair of the Youth Council began their presentation by giving a quick bit of background information about the Youth Council. It was established in August 2021 to represent all of the views of young persons between the ages of 14 and 19 who lived, attended education or were part of a youth organisation within the borough.

They then outlined the aims of the Youth Council as being the following:

- To represent the views and needs of all young people in the borough.
- To act as advisors to RBWM and liaise with the Council, businesses, and other organisations.
- To celebrate the achievements of young people in RBWM.
- To work on projects that were of interest to young people, to raise awareness of their views and interests

With regards to their street lighting report, they stated that in January 2022, a letter was written by the Youth Council to the Council as part of the 2022/23 budget consultation process. In February 2022, an invitation was extended to them to attend a meeting with Councillor Carroll, Councillor Hilton, and Kevin McDaniel, who wished to address some of the concerns that had been raised within the letter. Young person's safety was the main concern which came out of both the letter and also the meeting. The Youth Council were asked to produce a report on the condition of street lighting within RBWM, from the perspective of young persons. A working group that was led by Youth Councillor Caitie Holden compiled the report, which was meant to be presented to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Panel in September 2022, however the meeting was cancelled due to the passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

They then provided some facts about street lighting to the panel. 5 studies conducted within the UK revealed that 38 fewer crimes per 100 occurred when an area was well lit. In 2020, it was revealed also that Thames Valley ranked sixth on the list of the highest number of women that were killed by men. This reinforced the Youth Council's belief that street lighting was of paramount importance for the safety of not just young persons, but all residents within the borough. The death of Sarah Everard highlighted this issue in even greater detail.

The identified areas of concern by the Youth Council were very much more rural areas. These included as examples Burchetts Green, Clewer Avenue, Parsonage Lane, Clewer Fields, the Windsor Road and the Ascot Road. They pleaded for the Council to improve lighting in areas such as these to ensure that young people within RBWM felt safe and secure.

The Chair thanked Holly and Alexander for their presentation and opened the floor to questions from panel members.

Councillor Greg Jones said that when some street lights were damaged due to cars for example, the reason it could take so long for them to be fixed was due to the Council awaiting specialist parts and having to get the electricity board to attend and fix it. He also said that some people would object to street lighting put up in certain places as they may not want to increase light pollution in that area for example. He asked if this had been considered when writing the report. Alexander Wood replied by saying that they had considered it, hence why they wished to focus on rural areas, where this would not necessarily be such an issue. Councillor Walters thanked them for their report and their presentation and said that there was also another school of thought when it came to street lighting. He said that it could potentially have negative impacts on wildlife and the environment. He then provided them with a web address for them to visit. Oran Norris-Browne, Democratic Services Officer then provided them with this in writing to visit offline. He said that a lot of people did not like lots of artificial light as they were unable to see the stars at night for example. Higher lighting areas could also create black spots for criminals to hide in and commit further crimes too. He wished to just make them aware of these things.



Holly Hannan thanked him for his comments but asked what was more important, the environment or safety. She expressed concerns over young people walking to and from school in the dark and stated that anything could happen to them. She was a huge advocate for the environment however huge safety issues were on display.

Councillor Luxton thanked them for their presentation and said that it was a very important issue that they were bringing to the panel's attention. Several issues had recently occurred in her ward near to Charters School. She said that many areas near the schools in her ward were very poorly lit and that it needed to be addressed.

Councillor Hunt said that the presentation was very well put together and thanked them for bringing it before the panel. She said that Burchetts Green was partly in her ward, but also in Councillor Brar's ward too. With respect to the Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) she was unaware of any young persons walking to and from there due to its location. She was aware of many buses going to and from the location, but no people attending on foot, and questioned if the Youth Council knew anybody who did walk. They were unsure of anybody personally but knew that people did walk to and from and that the area was very poorly lit.

Councillor Davey said to the two Youth Councillors that they could suggest a motion to the panel, to move things forward and put in a plan of action at the meeting. Oran Norris-Browne said that he could advise them with regards to this at the appropriate time privately during the meeting.

Councillor Brar asked the officers if they possessed a list of locations of concern with regards to poor lighting, or were they rated in priority order. Andrew Durrant, Executive Director of Place Services said that it would be beneficial to address that question when he summed up at the end of the agenda item. The Chair agreed to this.

Councillor Del Campo said this topic was certainly one that could be looked at going forward and suggested a potential task and finish group as being a way forward.

Councillor Singh thanked all of the Youth Councillors for their work on the report. He said that he would like to have seen the responses from TVP if they were still at the meeting. He noted a number of areas within his ward which were crime hotspots and should be well lit, including where the new car park had been built. He asked if they had seen an increase in lights being broken or not switched on around the borough.

Holly Hannan replied by saying that she had seen lights out around the borough and said that they were clearly not being fixed. They wished for better intervention and a better way to report and keep a track of these things. They also admitted that they probably missed some areas, due to the lack of resources that were available to them.

Councillor Singh asked if the Youth Council had noticed an added sense of concern around the state of reflective beacons within the borough. The Chair and the Youth Councillors were not sure what was being referred to here.

Councillor Shelim said that lighting was very important for security in the borough. He said that his view was that issues in specific ward, needed to be chased up by the ward councillors specifically. They could then follow this up with officers in the most effective way.

The Chair then invited officers to summarise and give their professional advice on the matters.

Andrew Durrant thanked the Youth Councillors for their report and said that it was very important for the Councils as a whole to listen to young persons within the borough. He admitted that as with everything there were competing priorities, whether this be with the environment or economic aspects. He thanked them for pointing out specific locations that had been identified as a problem. Each location of course had different factors to consider, and each had to be handled differently to each other. He said that the Residents Survey would

potentially be a good avenue to pursue. Most persons in the borough did feel safe, however it was important to focus on the small percentage of people who did not.

Andrew Durrant said that it was important to also not hamper the engagement of young persons in extra curricular activities also, due to low amounts of street lighting. He recognised the comments that had been made about current street lights within the borough. He said that it was always helpful when these were reported and recognised that lights may not have been fixed as quickly as they should have in the past. He said that there was a lot of intelligence available between the Youth Council and the officers and said that they just needed to home in on what the issues were.

The Chair suggested a quick comfort break where Oran Norris-Browne could discuss with the Youth Council, their options that were available to them.

***The meeting was adjourned at 21:10***

***The meeting re-convened at 21:21***

It was discussed between the officers and the Youth Council representatives that they could not support a motion at the meeting as they did not want to speak on behalf of the Youth Council, without having consulted them first. Officers suggested that they look into the issues that had been raised at the meeting and invite the Youth Council back to a future meeting to inform them of the work that had been undertaken and any other information that they felt needed to be distributed. Several options could potentially be formulated between the officers and the Youth Council and put before the panel at a future meeting.

**AGREED: That the Youth Council be invited back to a future Place Overview & Scrutiny meeting.**

## WORK PROGRAMME

Oran Norris-Browne outlined to the panel what was currently scheduled in for the next meeting. 2 scoping documents were currently outstanding, one being on CIL and one being on the River Thames Scheme. The Chair asked the panel if the River Thames Scheme was to do with the route all the way to Staines, or if it was just within the borough as he was not too sure how a scoping document for part of the scheme would entirely work. He said that he would look into this offline.

With regards to the CIL scoping document, Oran Norris-Browne said that this had sat with a Councillor who was no longer on the panel, and therefore it needed to be re-assigned. He explained that it had first been created in May 2022 and had already appeared on the June 2022 agenda for officer comment, however since then it had somewhat stagnated. Councillor Singh agreed that he would work with Mark Beeley, Democratic Services Officer, and Statutory Scrutiny Officer to perfect it.

**AGREED: That Councillor Singh perfects the scoping document on CIL and brings it back to the panel.**

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 9.30 pm

Chair.....

Date.....