

DISABILITY AND INCLUSION FORUM

Monday 13 March 2023

Present: Councillors Angela Clark (Chairman), Lisa Hughes (Vice-Chairman) and Dominic Manley

Present virtually: Tim Clare, Peter Haley, Robin Pemberton, Habibah Tariq, Jatinder Singh Rakhra and Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra

Also in attendance: Councillor Phil Haseler

Also in attendance virtually: Councillor Samantha Rayner

Officers: Kirsty Hunt, Ian Brazier-Dubber and Ellen McManus-Fry

Officers in attendance virtually: Chelsea Bridges

Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all to the Forum.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Sharon Bunce, Victoria Holt and Sharon Carrigan.

Minutes From the Last Forum

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting on 12 December 2022 be a true and accurate record.

Maidenhead Regeneration

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that the Magnet Leisure Centre site was sold for the development of 434 residential units. Site commencement work started in October 2022, and this had included the demolition of the former Magnet Leisure Centre. The site had been developed in two halves – the former Leisure Centre would be replaced by 251 residential units, and in 2-3 years' time, the site of the former King Ten Pin Bowling site on Kennet Road would house 87 residential units.

Monthly board meetings were held with Countryside, the developers, and the Property Company understood that they would be undertaking a ground-breaking ceremony during the week of 13 March 2023 which meant that the main development would begin having cleared the site. The first sales from the site were expected to begin in early 2024 with the first residential completions in late 2024/early 2025. As part of this, the 87 affordable housing units were being sold to Abri, a large social housing provider who managed homes across the borough. These would be family units and apartments, 33 of which were rented and 54 were shared ownership for sale.

Once development had been completed at the Leisure Centre Site, development would begin on the Bowling site, which was currently being used as the car park for the users of both the doctor's surgery and employees. Further management work would need to be done to look at how to deal with parking strategies, but progress had been made.

The second round of public consultation on the proposed development of the golf course site had been ongoing and Cala Homes, the appointed developer, were seeking to develop

somewhere between 1800 and 2000 homes. It would take about a year for a decision to be made from the point of application due to the size and complexity of the application.

The proposals for the Nicholson Quarter redevelopment had many facets, and planning consent for the development was granted in Autumn 2022 for a scheme that was originally consented in March 2021. In October 2022, the Borough supported the developer in carrying out a compulsory purchase order (CPO) to ensure that all appropriate pieces of land were able to be acquired to enable the development to come forward.

An enquiry was held into this development and as a result, the planning application decision was challenged and was subject to a High Court challenge, the decision of which was expected by the end of May 2023. Following the enquiry into the CPO held in October 2022, the inspector issued his report into the granting of the CPO which concluded that of the 14 objectors to the CPO, 13 could be dealt with in an appropriate way, but concluded that one objector hadn't been dealt with in the appropriate way and thus decided not to grant the borough a CPO.

As a result, RBWM Property Company have sought to review this decision in the High Court as it felt that it was important that there was due consideration made to that process, and it was hoped that this process would conclude in summer 2023.

The Broadway Car Park had been shut since January due to the car park being in extremely poor condition as a result of concrete stress failure. A strategy would be brought forward to manage parking in the town centre as areas such as Shopmobility were largely impacted by the closure of this car park. Areas such as Shopmobility had been accelerated within the teams to try and resolve this issue sooner rather than later.

The Chair asked if, in the event that Broadway Car Park was not viable to repair, the Borough would consider building a temporary multistorey car park in the interim.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that in this event, surface or increased temporary deck access parking in the town centre would be explored.

The Chair asked how and where the blue badge parking spaces in Broadway Car Park would be replaced in the town centre.

Ian Brazier-Dubber explained that data was needed to inform a new strategy in which these spaces would be re-provided.

The Vice-Chair stated that for many people with disabilities, the closure of the car park meant that they were displaced and unable to come into the Town Centre.

Ian Brazier-Dubber explained that he would look through this with colleagues in the Place directorate.

Peter Haley stated that People to Places operated the Shopmobility facility in Maidenhead which was running at about 30% of normal demand. People to Places was a membership-based service and anecdotally, many people had informed the organisation that they would not be renewing their membership. He asked for clarity on the time scale for alternative facilities.

Ian Brazier-Dubber confirmed that this was being looked into as soon as possible.

The Chair asked for a meeting to be held between the Forum and officers to investigate this issue.

ACTION: Officers to meet with Forum members to discuss the loss of blue badge spaces and alternative parking sites.

Dominic Manley explained that as a wheelchair user, he used to come into town regularly but now rarely came in as it was difficult to find a parking space.

The Vice-Chair asked if more than 90% of the affordable units on the former Magnet Leisure Centre site would be built to M4(2) standards as set out in the planning application.

Ian Brazier-Dubber confirmed this was the case.

The Chair explained that she had visited the Wilderness Medical Centre and observed that only 3 cars in the full car park were displaying a doctor's appointment ticket in the window. This car park was only for the doctors, dentist and chemist and a sticker was needed if parking here. The car park was not owned by RBWM so was not patrolled by officers.

There was also no parking along the northern area, as this was cordoned off with bollards. There was no dropped curb from Kennet Avenue Car Park to the access of the doctor's surgery for wheelchair user or a person with mobility issues

Ian Brazier-Dubber thanked the Chair for bringing this to his attention and stated that he would discuss this with the doctors to ensure that the use of the car park was clear.

The Vice-Chair stated that the loss of the blue badge spaces at the former Magnet Leisure Centre would impact on the Wilderness Medical Centre as many patients with disabilities would have parked on this site. She also explained that Sharon Bunce had emailed St Mary's ward councillors on the topic of the inaccessibility of the footpath that ran parallel to St Ives Road.

Ellen McManus-Fry, Equalities and Community Engagement Officer, explained that she had been CC'd into this email and had followed up with officers. These officers were looking into whether step-free access was considered as part of the planning and would report back. They would also look into the possibility of signage explaining the layout and accessibility of the path.

Safeguarding

Chelsea Bridges, Assurance and Policy Officer, gave an update on the new Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection regime. Formal inspections would begin in September, and the CQC aimed to carry out up to 20 assessments between September and December 2023. From early 2024, the CQC planned to continue to carry out further formal assessments and report the findings. The CQC had a formal inspection programme which contained the themes of working with people, providing support, ensuring safety, and leadership.

In preparation for the inspection, the Council had undertaken many pieces of work to understand its ongoing work and goals. This work included reports, working groups, staff forums and learning sessions which aimed to provide staff with the tools they needed to provide a quality service.

The Chair thanked Chelsea Bridges for the update and commented that the website was very comprehensive.

Dominic Manley asked if adult social care was previously part of the CQC's remit.

Chelsea Bridges explained that provider services were routinely inspected by the CQC, but adult social care hadn't been inspected by an authority like CQC for 10-15 years.

Changing Places

The Vice-Chair explained that Changing Places were a type of accessible toilet that enabled people with much more complex needs than a standard accessible toilet.

There were currently Changing Places at Braywick Leisure Centre, Windsor Castle and Legoland. Work was underway to install one at Windsor Leisure Centre, and the Vice-Chair was speaking with Julia White, Visitor Marketing Manager, about looking for a town centre location in Windsor. A round of funding would be opening again shortly and discussions were being held about how this could be achieved.

Parallel Windsor

The Vice-Chair explained that Parallel Windsor, a festival of inclusivity, would be held on 2 July 2023. In addition to a range of various challenge events, there would be a fully accessible family festival that would feature various zones including active lifestyle, technology, play and entertainment and storytelling among many others.

Peter Haley added that People to Places were holding discussions about providing a shuttle service with the organisation's minibuses and were looking at hosting a Shopmobility stand in order to provide mobility equipment.

Dominic Manley asked where the event would be held.

The Vice-Chair explained that it would be held along the Long Walk in Windsor.

Local Elections 2023

Kirsty Hunt, Service Lead for Electoral and Democratic Services, gave an update to the Forum on preparations for the upcoming elections. Regarding accessibility at polling stations, equipment had been ordered and was starting to arrive. The Elections team had been talking with colleagues across the country on being as innovative as possible to make the best use of funding. She explained that feedback on particular stations was welcome in order to feed into the next polling stations review which would launch in October 2023.

Legislative changes meant that photo ID was a requirement in order to vote at a polling station. People without a form of accepted photo ID were able to apply for a free voter ID, known as a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC). As of 13 March 2023, 60 applications for a VAC had been received, 9 of which had been refused as the photographic images did not meet the required standard.

This new requirement was being communicated through various channels, including leaflets, e-newsletters and social media. Outreach work had been conducted by visiting various community events in order to spread the message. Anyone with suggestions for community outreach events could get in touch with Ollie Cassells by emailing ollie.cassells@rbwm.gov.uk.

The Chair thanked Kirsty Hunt for the update and asked if it was possible to display any communications regarding voter ID in supermarkets.

Kirsty Hunt explained that Ollie Cassells had been reaching out various supermarkets to ask about displaying information in community noticeboards.

Dominic Manley commented that it seemed as though postal voting would solve the issue of photo ID being a requirement to vote in polling stations.

Kirsty Hunt stated that while this was true, she was conscious on issues such as postal strikes which could delay this process.

The Vice-Chair asked when the deadline was for people applying for a VAC, and the date when the election was formally announced.

Kirsty Hunt confirmed that the deadline for applying for a VAC was 5pm on 25 April 2023, and the notice of election would be published on 21 March 2023.

Dominic Manley asked for clarification on the postal vote process and whether anything would be expected in terms of identification aside from the five-year refresh.

Kirsty Hunt confirmed that if an individual had a postal vote, they would have had their ID checked and there would be no observable change to the process.

The Chair thanked Kirsty Hunt and stated it would be interesting to receive feedback after the elections.

Kirsty Hunt echoed these comments and stated that it would be interesting and especially useful to learn from these Local Elections in preparation for a General Elections.

Ellen McManus-Fry asked if residents requiring help at libraries to register for a VAC could ask for help at any time or if specific sessions were being held.

Kirsty Hunt stated that library staff would always be happy to help, but slots were also advertised on library websites.

Any Other Business

The Vice-Chair explained that a Sports and Leisure Survey had been circulated though there were some issues with the accessibility of the survey itself which was disappointing.

Back in February, Forum members were invited to an event at the Learning Centre in Windsor Castle where Access Able and others launched the destination access guides for Windsor and Eton. There was now funding available for Maidenhead and Ascot to also have destination guides, and Access Able were due to start surveying soon. After this meeting was held, a Visit Windsor accessible tourism meeting was held, with Ross Calladine from Visit England and the Government's Disability Ambassador for the tourism sector also attending. He had discussed a best-in-class accessible tourism toolkit for smaller medium-sized businesses being developed. Visit England had obtained funding and were working with a design agency on highlighting what best-in-class accessible tourism looked like and were planning to use the network development in Windsor.

In the previous week, a webinar had been held by Visit Windsor with Access Able which was aimed at local businesses to encourage them to have their businesses surveyed in order to add their details to the Access Able guides.

Public realm improvements around Windsor Castle had begun which would make the area feel more pedestrian friendly.

Date of the Next Forum

Forum members noted 12 June 2023 as the next date of the Forum.

The meeting, which began at 11.00 am, finished at 12.20 pm

Chair.....

Date.....