

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

Thursday 16 March 2023

Present virtually: Councillors David Coppinger (Chairman), Clive Baskerville, Catherine Del Campo, Gurpreet Bhangra, Greg Jones, Gerry Clark, and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance virtually: PCSO Matthew Wingrove (TVP)

Officers in attendance virtually: Laurence Ellis, Robyn Bunyan, Neil Walter, Ian Brazier-Dubber

### Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Forum members then introduced themselves.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Targowski, who was substituted by Councillor Haseler. Vice-Chair Helen Taylor also sent her apologies.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests received.

### Update on Parking

*(This item was discussed before Item 3 – Minutes)*

Neil Walter, Parking Enforcement Manager, gave a brief overview of the situation with parking in Maidenhead. He reported that daily and general parking in Maidenhead has seen a recovery in 2022 with the last two or three months experiencing similar pre-Covid levels of daily parking.

Despite this, there was the issue that business and office-based companies were not returning to Maidenhead and season tickets remained extremely low. While he was not predicting a significant increase in this, Neil Walter mentioned that he had recently contacted one of the managing companies in one of the office buildings in Maidenhead about taking up the 50 spaces that they had on lease since August 2021. From this, Neil Walter expected that they were preparing to return to Maidenhead, which may encourage other companies to follow suit.

On general parking, Neil Walters explained that he, Councillor Jones and some highways officers investigated car parks a few months ago. While it had been ordered, the work on reviewing on-street parking along a number of roads in Maidenhead had not started yet, which resulted in potentially 15 new on-street parking bays being installed. He added that he was informed that those would be installed within the next four to six weeks.

In addition, Parking Enforcement were seeking to re-line certain areas around the Broadway development site, where vehicles were sighted parking along the hoardings, as well as the restructuring of the limited waiting parking along Queen Street alongside relining in other areas.

Neil Walter also reported that Nicholson's multi-storey car park was still closed at the moment. He conveyed that 63% of the normal usage of Nicholson's car park at this time of year being transferred to other car parks mainly Hine's Meadow and Grove Road car parks. Hine's Meadow car park had seen a 47% increase in January and February of 2023 with Grove Road car park experiencing a 16% increase, with most of these expected to be caused by residents who usually used Nicholson's.

While parking enforcement remained quite high, there was a high level of non-compliance with parking restrictions, namely parking on double-yellow lines in the evening. In response, Neil Walter reported, additional evening patrols had been commissioned to mitigate this, particularly around the Town Centre.

On the Magnet Leisure Centre, Neil Walter reported that the majority of the parking there had been closed except for a small area of parking outside the Wilderness Centre and the new area of parking at the Tenpin bowling site, which was being used by staff from Wilderness Centre, Commonwealth War Graves and RBWM. In spite of this, there was no daily parking at this car park at the moment.

Neil Walter then explained that he was looking to change some parking restrictions around the roads near the old Magnet site along Holmanleaze and Kennet Road to increase some short stay parking in those areas.

Neil Walter also informed that Vicus Way opened in late 2022, mainly being used by Town Centre workers and other people for electric vehicle charging points. In Braywick, more people were using the car park in this area, likely to walk or cycle to the Town Centre.

On the whole, the region had about a thousand to 1,100 available spaces on any given day, mainly long-stay parking spaces. While short stay parking areas were very popular, this may be partly lost in relation to shop mobility units from Nicholson's multi-storey potentially moving to West Street as was the case with the demolition of Nicholson's.

Councillor Jones asked if there could be better signage around the footpath which ran from the Vicus Way car park to the rear of Fotherby Court, claiming that many residents did not know that the footpath existed. Neil Walter responded that he could discuss this with colleagues at the Highways Team.

**ACTION: Neil Walter raise to the Highways Team on the signage around the footpath between Vicus Way car park and Fotherby Court.**

Councillor Singh raised a couple of questions. He stated that residents and businesses had raised concerns regarding the closure of Broadway car park. He requested to see the report regarding the safety and repair works. He also asked about the process of the car park being demolished.

Regarding the first question, Ian Brazier-Dubber, Managing Director of RBWM Property Company, informed that a report on the structural elements of the car park had been received and scrutinised. This was part of the research in the formulation of a paper around the car park, which would then provide options around the car park and how to properly deal with it. He suggested that he could discuss with Councillor Singh outside of the meeting on how the report could be shared.

On the demolition of a car park, Ian Brazier-Dubber explained that it was a procurement matter whereby an appropriate demolition contractor would be acquired. The Borough and contractor would then go through a procurement process to assess the costs, risks and timescales. Once this procurement process had concluded, a report would be formulated on the wider contextual issues of the car park as well as the outline of the demolition process.

Councillor Singh then asked if the report would be brought to Full Council. Ian Brazier-Dubber replied that he was uncertain at the moment. He explained that Cabinet and Full Council had approved a Broadway car park budget, and therefore the next steps were to ensure that the decisions to implement would go through the right processes.

Councillor Singh then asked if there was an option to bring the recently purchased car parking at Sienna Court and a nearby office block's car park into public use as the redevelopment at Nicholson's car park had been stalled. Ian Brazier-Dubber replied that as part of the

consideration process around the Broadway car park, temporary alternative provisions would be investigated to provide provisional parking around the Town Centre, with Sienna Court being considered.

Councillor Singh then asked what the plans were for Waldeck House. Ian Brazier-Dubber replied that the process of demolition was underway.

Councillor Del Campo asked how Broadway car park ended up being in use despite being informed that it was not safe two or three years ago. Ian Brazier-Dubber replied that assessments were undertaken which identified Broadway car park as reaching critical point which led to it to be recently closed. Neil Walter added that Broadway car park had been monitored for a number of years, primarily relating to concrete spalling, and undertaking remedial works when required, such as boarding up and netting. He then explained that a significant amount of spalling had taken at the end of 2022, which meant that the car park had to be closed to remove the spalling and then undertake a survey on the depth of spalling throughout the rest of the car park.

Councillor Del Campo then asked if there were any statistics on the use of Vicus Way car park. Neil Walter answered that 587 vehicles had used Vicus Way car park in January and February 2023 with an average of 10 cars per day around a maximum of 30 vehicles per day.

Regarding concrete spalling, Councillor Haseler commented that Broadway car park had closed, and remained closed, under health and safety grounds, explaining that the winter season in 2022-23 had affected the concrete structure and caused it to spall. On the current administration, he then explained that the Council had not made any decisions yet due to officers needing to consider all the options available in relation to the car park. He then stated that a paper would be brought to Cabinet to agree officers' recommendations and cautioned that the officers' options should not be pre-empted before it had been written.

Councillor Singh asked for clarification from Councillor Haseler as the Cabinet Member for Parking. He stated that he recalled that two floors of Broadway car park had closed August 2022 on the grounds of anti-social teenagers throwing concrete off the top of the car park but claimed that he did not see any evidence about this. He asked for confirmation on this; or whether the reason was structural issues. Councillor Singh also commented that the use of Vicus Way car park was concerningly low (with roughly 10 a day) as the Council had spent £14 million on the car park. He asked what the response to this would be, whether encourage more residents to use Vicus Way car park or repurpose it.

Councillor Haseler affirmed that the top two floors were closed for anti-social behaviour rather than concrete spalling. He also stated that there needed to be more encouragement of residents to use Vicus Way car park.

## Minutes

*(This item was discussed after Item 4 – Update on Parking)*

Councillor Del Campo requested that the minutes from the previous meeting to be amended to include the discussion and question on social housing.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.**

## Maidenhead Town Manager Update

Robyn Bunyan, Maidenhead Town Manager, informed that there were some positive updates in spite of difficulties in trade due to the cost-of-living crisis, a closed car park and the start of the year. The larger retailers had good business in January 2023, though smaller retailers were struggling. In response, local businesses would continue to be promoted and supported

as part of the Maidenhead brand. In addition, the 'My Royal Borough' brand was also being promoted amongst local businesses in which they would be offered support, networking and opportunities for further training.

Robyn Bunyan also informed that football was up by 6% in January 2023, a positive compared to the issues in which the Borough was experiencing. She also reported that residents continued to use and invest in Maidenhead, such as a slight return of officer workers, contracts being signed and businesses continuing to open.

On parking, Robyn Bunyan reported that the 'Where Can I Park?' campaign was successful to inform residents on the most convenient places to park. She also discussed Hines Meadow car park in which parking usage had increased.

Robyn Bunyan then explained that she sought to ensure car parks had a good welcome to residents, namely being user friendly, free and tidy. With Hines Meadow, for instance, the lifts in a stairwell were fully functional. In the following week, she stated, teams would be sent to clean the car park, stairwell and lifts to ensure the car park was clean. Officers were also looking into the options to ensure that residents had a good experience, such as auditing the signage.

Robyn Bunyan also requested for Forum members to report anything that appeared or dirty on the RBWM website or directly email herself.

Robyn Bunyan then reported that the six-week sign-up period had started where residents could register their interest in the Town Team and its proposed action groups. Any resident who lived, worked or were part of any organisation or group were welcomed to register their interest. She mentioned that many residents and stakeholders had already expressed interest. The initial six-week period would be followed by a workshop session in Maidenhead Town Centre where interested people and parties would be invited to share ideas and ways to move forward.

Robyn Bunyan also informed that seed funding had been acquired through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which would support the Town Team initiative for three years.

Following the workshop session, Town Team representatives would be appointed who would then lead on the agreed program and projects with the support from Robyn Bunyan as the Town Team coordinator.

Robyn Bunyan stated that this was a positive step in engaging of the local community with Maidenhead as well as creating innovative ideas and projects along the way.

The Chair was delighted that the Town Team initiative had started.

Councillor Del Campo asked if seed funding was funding in the business sense rather than funding for seeds. Robyn Bunyan replied that the seed funding was through UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Through this, there would be three blocks of funding over three years: the first year of funding would go to the Maidenhead Town Team; the following years of funding would go to supporting the Town Team in other areas.

On parking, Councillor Del Campo then asked about shop mobility. Robyn Bunyan replied that there had been a drop in use of shop mobility, partly due to it being quieter at the start of the year. She affirmed that this was still on the radar amongst officers.

Councillor Jones asked if Robyn Bunyan could get the freeholders of Providence Place to clean it up the building, claiming it looked tired and dirty. He also asked if a new tenant was moving into a building near Providence Place. Robyn Bunyan confirmed that a new tenant was moving into the South Rotunda building. Regarding the Providence Place building, she

informed that the freeholders were doing some work to change the cladding. She agreed that the building looked tired, and it was worth having a conversation on cleaning the building.

**ACTION: Robyn Bunyan to raise discussions on cleaning the building in Providence Place.**

Councillor Singh explained that due to some development of a crossing over the A4 Bath Road in Holmanleaze (as part of section 106), the Islamic Trust, which were carrying out some redevelopment of their own, were promised to be allowed to use parking at 10-Pin Bowling. However, he explained, the Trust was excluded from using it due it being predominantly a parking permit-only area, which had caused some concern about parking and congestion. Based on this, Councillor Singh asked if there was anything which Robyn Bunyan could do, such as informing residents in Holmanleaze of alternative parking available or encourage walking and cycling.

Robyn Bunyan responded that she could share maps with the local mosque and the local area to promote the available areas for parking. Regarding the crossing over the A4 Bath Road, she informed that the crossing was still planned but was uncertain of the timings, adding that Ian Brazier-Dubber would be more aware of this.

**ACTION: Robyn Bunyan to share available areas for parking in Holmanleaze to the local mosque and local area.**

The Chair added that the crossing was still going ahead though he was uncertain of the date.

After Councillor Singh commented on the slow progress of development, Councillor Haseler explained that Council Officers had to follow a process before the designs and the installation of the crossing could take place, namely the payment of Section 106 agreement. He mentioned that these would take place before development started. He also added that he did not know the timeframe. He then stated that there were some parking spaces in Holmanleaze to facilitate mosque attendees alongside Hines Meadow and the underpass of St Clare's Road.

Councillor Singh then asked about the support for retailers in Nicholson's Shopping Centre who were struggling and experiencing loss due to the issue with the Broadway car park as well as rents and rates. Robyn Bunyan answered that she had been in contact with businesses in Nicholson's Shopping Centre and the wider town to promote opportunities for free marketing and support. In addition, businesses were also contacted on business rate reductions and also sharing rateable values so that they were aware of their potential business rates for the forthcoming year. Robyn Bunyan added that the Borough was seeking to be as connected as possible to its businesses.

The Chair asked what the situation was on in-store theft. Robyn Bunyan replied that anti-social behaviour and shop theft was still an issue as it was still being reported but also being under-reported to the police. She added that the Borough was encouraging retailers to report cases of shoplifting.

PCSO Matthew Wingrove, Thames Valley Police, agreed that, while continuously being reported, shoplifting and anti-social behaviour was underreported. He explained that Thames Valley Police were seeking to establish connections with retailer stores through direct engagement and the use of the town radio systems to communicate with them. He also encouraged more reporting of any incidents.

Councillor McWilliams asked about the contrast in figures between the centre of Maidenhead and the highstreets in the south-east. Robyn Bunyan replied that Maidenhead Town Centre highstreets, while receiving visitors, was primarily and consistently used by its local residents. Meanwhile, the south-east had towns where residents dropped in and out.

Councillor McWilliams followed-up by asking if local independence distinguished Maidenhead from neighbouring towns. Robyn Bunyan believed so.

Councillor Jones commented on the lack of reporting on shop theft from local businesses and that shops needed to report on any incidents so that resources could be put in place. Robyn Bunyan stated that police resourcing issues may have discouraged reporting to the police. She reiterated that shop owners needed to report any cases. PCSO Matthew Wingrove reiterated that the police needed to be notified so that they could get an idea of the issues and resolve them. He added that Thames Valley Police had been increasingly hosting 'Have Your Say' surgeries and were open to having other public drop-in sessions.

Item Suggestions for Future Forums

Councillor Jones suggested an item on parking at Maidenhead Train Station, namely the station drop-off.

Dates of Future Meetings

The Forum noted the next meeting was on 1 June 2023.

The meeting, which began at 6.33 pm, finished at 7.49 pm

Chair.....

Date.....