

An Update on RBWM Corporate Plan Engagement

RBWM is currently working on developing a new Corporate Plan, that will set out refreshed priorities for the council and the place it serves. The emerging aims and priorities are being developed alongside the Budget and take into account the priorities of the new Leader and Cabinet and of individual services, as well as input from early engagement sessions with key stakeholder groups in the community.

These early engagement sessions took the form of a series of in-person discussions aimed at:

- 1) older people and people with disabilities
- 2) children and young people
- 3) the voluntary and community sector

Engagement with the business community was undertaken in the form of an online survey, and feedback could also be shared by members of the public via a survey on RBWM Together or email.

The session that focused on older people and people with a disability was held in Maidenhead Library on 9th October. 16 participants attended the session, as well as two councillors (including the Leader, Cllr Werner) and several members of the Strategy, Policy and Performance team who facilitated the session.

There was a presentation on the council's financial situation and the process of developing a Corporate Plan, followed by small group discussions of a range of topics:

- Are there enough opportunities for older and disabled people to volunteer, learn new skills or work?
- How safe and clean is your local environment?
- How easy is it to find out about and access housing options which meet your needs?
- How easy do you find it to get out and about around the borough?
- What do you think of the balance between online and in-person services?
- How easy it is to get find support for daily living and care needs?
- How effective is the council at communicating and engaging around relevant decisions and developments?

Feedback was also sought on the things the people most liked about living in the Borough, and the things they would like to see improved, and on what type of actions the council should prioritise in order to balance the budget.

A full report on all engagement feedback received will be published alongside the Budget paper presented to Cabinet in February, but some initial observations from the session held with older and disabled people are shared below:

How easy do you find it to get out and about around the borough?

There are great assets and facilities available in the Borough, such as Norden Farm, the leisure centres, Braywick Heath, and the libraries, as well as the various green spaces and historic attractions in the area. However, it was noted that it was often difficult to access these places without a car and there was dissatisfaction with the local public transport offer. Transport was highlighted as a particular priority for groups and individuals with learning disabilities. Parking was also raised as an area for

improvement, as was the safety and accessibility of pavements for residents with mobility issues and other disabilities.

Are there enough opportunities for older and disabled people to volunteer, learn new skills or work?

Something that was raised as a strength in the Borough was the number of older people with skills and experience that they could contribute to their local community, and also the willingness of those who are better off to help others who are less fortunate. However, there needed to be more done to reach out to these residents to encourage them to get involved and communicate the opportunities available. The issues for recruiting volunteers (and professionals) within certain sectors was discussed, particular around supporting those with learning disabilities and volunteering in day care centres. It was noted that individuals with learning disabilities did not have much variety of opportunities for voluntary or paid work, and that employers needed to be better informed and supported about the contribution that people with a learning disability could make to the work force and the importance of reasonable adjustments.

How effective is the council at communicating and engaging around relevant decisions and developments?

There was a desire for communication from the council to be made more accessible and inclusive, both in the availability of particular formats (e.g. easy read) and in the use of language and metrics which made sense to the community. This was raised as a particularly important point for the writing and monitoring of the Corporate Plan and its goals. There were additional suggestions around consultations and around promotion of the council's communications materials such as the Residents Newsletter and the Community Information Champions.

Discussions around the other topics covered points such as:

- A general perception of safety in the borough, with some suggestions for improving the local environment through litter picking, 'Adopt a street' initiatives and flower displays.
- The lack of affordable housing in the borough, including the impact this has on increasing numbers of older people whose families are unable to live nearby due to the cost of local housing.
- Concern about whether there was enough consideration of the needs of disabled individuals and their families when new developments were being planned.
- The barriers faced by people who need help to access online services.