

## PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 14 September 2023

Present: Councillors Siân Martin (Chair), Gary Reeves, Clive Baskerville, Alison Carpenter, Jodie Grove, Asghar Majeed, Gurch Singh, Kashmir Singh and Julian Sharpe

Also in attendance: Councillor Suzanne Cross

Also in attendance virtually: Councillor Joshua Reynolds

Officers: Mark Beeley and Andrew Durrant

Officers in attendance virtually: Chris Joyce and Tim Golabek

### Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Walters and Councillor Blundell.

Councillor Sharpe and Councillor Reeves were attending the meeting as substitutes.

### Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

### Minutes

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.**

### Resident Scrutiny Suggestion - Bike Thefts at Windsor Leisure Centre

The Chair explained that a resident had submitted a scrutiny topic suggestion on bike thefts outside Windsor Leisure Centre. There was concern that young people were having their bikes stolen from outside of the leisure centre and requested that the council review this to see what could be done. The resident had a number of suggestions which could be implemented to improve the situation.

Tim Golabek, Service Lead for Transport, provided the RBWM response to the suggestion. The council were aware of the bike thefts at a number of locations including Windsor Leisure Centre. It was important to note that the responsibility lay with the individual in ensuring that their bike was properly secured however the council would do its best to provide safe locations. This location had recently been reviewed and last year the council had received a grant from Active Travel England and a planning application had been made to create a secure cycle storage unit. The storage would be managed by Spokesafe and a visual ID check would be required to enter the unit, with a small fee charge. Officers from the council should not be involved in dealing with thefts, this was a police matter. The police could provide residents with things like UV stickers to identify stolen bikes which should be utilised.

Councillor Carpenter said that the plans sounded good, there was a need for more cycle storage in Windsor and across the borough. She asked if the target user was for those using the leisure centre or for residents wanting to access the town centre. The cycle storage would be built on the recycling centre, Councillor Carpenter asked if this would be relocated. A small

fee had been mentioned, Councillor Carpenter asked how much this would be. She concluded by asking who would be responsible for maintaining and cleaning the cycle unit.

Tim Golabek explained that the cycle storage unit would cost a significant amount of money but had been funded through the grant which the council had received. The unit could be used by both those visiting the town centre and also the Windsor Leisure Centre. This was the first project of its kind in the borough and Tim Golabek was keen to explore other locations where secure cycle storage could be implemented. The charge was £1 per use but a further discussion would need to be had around the maintenance of the unit between Spokesafe and the council. The recycling centre location was not deemed to be beneficial due to the amount of fly tipping, Tim Golabek would check with colleagues in the Place team to see if there were any plans to relocate this.

**ACTION – Tim Golabek to check with the Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services whether the recycling centre at Windsor Leisure Centre would be relocated should the cycle storage unit plans be progressed.**

Councillor Sharpe felt that this was a narrow scope on the topic, he asked what was being provided for residents from other areas of the borough.

Tim Golabek said that the team did receive requests for cycle storage, the team wanted to roll this out across the borough but a substantial investment was needed. Further funds would need to be identified to bring forward further proposed sites in other areas of the borough.

Councillor Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Communities and Leisure, was excited that the secure cycle storage facility was coming to Windsor Leisure Centre. There would also be the ability for residents to repair and maintain their bikes in the facility, for example bike pumps. He encouraged residents to use the unit once it was installed as this could ensure that more storage units were created in other locations.

Councillor Reeves said that this was a good plan to deal with the issues of theft which had occurred in the area. It could be used as a test and could be reviewed after a year to see how successful the unit had been and how much usage it had received. Councillor Reeves asked if there was any criteria around the location which encouraged Active Travel England to give RBWM the grant. He questioned the number of bikes which could use the unit and whether any research had been done into the number of bikes which were left outside the leisure centre and how many of these had been stolen.

Tim Golabek explained that the council had been in discussions with Active Travel England about plans to make both walking and cycling more appealing to residents. Funding could be bid for on design work or delivery, this unit was felt to be a suitable addition to other active travel measures in the local vicinity. Things needed to be worked through on the running of the unit with Spokesafe, the Panel should note that the unit was still subject to planning permission. Demand was difficult to predict and had been based on the number of bike racks which were currently outside the leisure centre. The size of the unit would greatly impact on cost.

Councillor Majeed asked if Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding could be used to fund further similar projects.

Tim Golabek confirmed that CIL could be used but this funding needed to be prioritised.

Councillor G Singh noted that the police were supportive and felt that the size of the unit was good. There was an issue with bike thefts in Maidenhead, he suggested that empty units in the Nicholsons Shopping Centre could be used as bike storage.

Councillor Reeves asked where the £1 fee charged would be going. He noted that children were having their bikes stolen, £1 in the current climate could be a deterrent for young people

using the cycle storage. Councillor Reeves asked if CCTV outside the leisure centre was adequate to prevent thefts.

Councillor Carpenter asked if the council had sought the opinion of cyclists for their views of the proposed cycle storage unit. She suggested that EV vehicles could be charged for parking to provide further funding for cycle storage. Councillor Carpenter asked what would be done to prevent thefts of bikes which were not parked in this cycle storage unit.

Tim Golabek explained that the £1 charge was required to maintain the visual ID check system for Spokesafe, this would be monitored by officers to ensure that this was a fair charge. The council had not taken on this cost itself as it was open ended. It was understood that this could be a deterrent to usage but was needed to maintain a secure storage unit. Bike thefts were a police matter and were not the responsibility of officers at the council. There was a road traffic safety team who could educate cyclists on how to secure their bike properly. The CCTV would cover the proposed unit. The council had decided this was a suitable location for a cycle storage unit and Active Travel England agreed, it was impossible to know if the grant would still have been received if the council had submitted a different proposed location. Further bids could be made in future. On using empty retail units, Tim Golabek felt that this was a good idea and noted that an internal cycle hub was planned in Reading. The main issue was cost, the Nicholsons Shopping Centre would require a charge and the unit would need to be converted.

Councillor Carpenter raised the idea of charging electric vehicles to park to fund further cycle storage in the borough.

Tim Golabek confirmed that Cabinet were considering EV charging around the borough, once this had been decided any funding could then be considered.

Councillor Sharpe was concerned that the storage unit would be located some distance from the leisure centre entrance. He asked how many cycle thefts had occurred outside of the leisure centre.

Tim Golabek reiterated that the storage unit would be located around 150 yards from the entrance to the leisure centre. The topic was specifically focused on bike thefts outside the leisure centre, the team could explore other locations where there were issues if funding could be found.

Councillor Grove noted that there would be an ID verification system, in future this data could be collated and those who were in greater financial hardship could be offered a reduced fare to use the unit.

Tim Golabek said that there was a cost to storing the bikes, Spokesafe would be the data owners. If this was brought in house in future, this could be explored.

Councillor G Singh said that thefts were being under reported as residents were not reporting things to the police.

Councillor Sharpe said it was important to use the right data before decisions were made. He felt it was not clear why this location had been chosen, particularly with the amount of crime and also the demand for cycle storage.

Chris Joyce, Assistant Director for Infrastructure, Sustainability and Economic Growth, said that the proposal had been made to install a cycle storage unit outside Windsor Leisure Centre. The Panel could choose to look at bike thefts outside the leisure centre or around the borough in further detail.

Councillor Reeves believed that it was a good location, the cycle storage unit would help to solve the issues with thefts outside the leisure centre. It was important to consider those

residents who could not afford the charge. Residents could also park their bike and walk into Windsor along the river. It was a positive step forward in encouraging residents to use their bikes. The only concern Councillor Reeves had was around those who would choose not to use the storage unit, as their bikes were still at risk of being stolen.

Councillor Carpenter felt that a piece of work could be undertaken to investigate thefts of bikes across the borough and identify the hotspots. It was important that groups like the Windsor Cycle Hub were consulted.

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the report and considered whether any further scrutiny was required.**

#### A308 speed limit reduction: Monkey Island Lane to M4 motorway bridge

Tim Golabek said that the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Customer Service Centre and Employment, had requested that the section of the A308 between Monkey Island Lane and the M4 motorway bridge was reviewed and that the speed limit was reduced from 40mph to 30mph. This had been long requested, the highways team and the police had gathered data and recommended that the current 40mph speed limit was retained. The report would be considered by Cabinet at the end of the month and a decision would be made.

There were two public speakers on the agenda item. Councillor Cross was the ward Councillor for Bray and lived very close to this section of the A308. Police had advised that there was generally good speed compliance. Councillor Cross said that this data had been gathered towards the end of the pandemic and the way it had been finalised was against government regulations. There was an active and effective Speedwatch group and a speed camera on this stretch, she felt that compliance was 'more than likely.' There were a number of 30mph sections on this road already and as this was a diversion off the M4, it would be difficult to travel at a quick speed anyway. There had recently been a serious accident as a car was leaving Thames Hospice, a 1mph drop in speed could result in a 5% drop in casualty rate. Residents were afraid of leaving their houses, particularly with the narrow footpaths and this left walkers and cyclists vulnerable. There was strong support from the local community to reduce the speed limit.

Andrew Cormie was representing the Holyport Residents Association. He had circulated a document to the Panel ahead of the meeting setting out government guidance on setting speed limits. In planning, there was strict guidance which needed to be followed. He felt that the guidance had not been followed by the council on speed limits. Once light posts had been installed on this section of road, the speed limit should have been reduced. Andrew Cormie noted that a petition previously submitted to the council had been signed by over 100 residents on this issue. He urged the Panel to recommend to Cabinet that the speed limit should be reduced to 30mph.

Andrew Durrant, Executive Director of Place Services, thanked both speakers for their comments. He added that officers had worked with the police to provide a factual report and judgement. The discussion should be based around debating the proposal and forming a recommendation to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

Councillor Grove felt that this was a clear decision to make, considering the spacing of the streetlights, the width of the footpath and other street features, there could be similar comparisons made to other 30mph roads in the borough. She did not see anything in the report which convinced her that the road should be kept at 40mph. The council was supposed to look after the best interests of residents, a significant number of residents wanted to see a change.

Councillor Baskerville was concerned about consistency, he argued that Cannon Lane in Cox Green was 30mph but was more rural than the A308. He felt that reducing the speed limit to 30mph would be consistent with other similar roads in the borough.

Councillor G Singh said that the area was becoming more built up and was difficult to justify the 40mph limit. He was pleased that the report had been considered by scrutiny before going to Cabinet, he welcomed this. Councillor Singh noted that after Monkey Island Lane, the speed limit would go back up to 50mph. He suggested that there could be a 40mph section added as a buffer.

Councillor Carpenter said that she agreed with the comments made by Councillor Grove. The speed camera was a good deterrent, the council needed to be responsible and ensure the safety of residents. Present day data could be used to provide a more accurate picture of the current speed of users of the road.

Councillor K Singh noted that officers and the police were against reducing the speed limit. He suggested that traffic calming measures could be required to enforce a lower limit as it could be difficult to enforce if the speed limit was reduced.

Councillor Grove countered that every road was not monitored, the 50mph to 30mph could be looked at and the suggestion of a 40mph buffer zone could be explored. However, this was not a reason to maintain the speed limit at 40mph for the whole stretch of road. Traffic calming measures were not being requested as there was an active Speedwatch group and speed camera already in place.

Councillor K Singh felt that the whole A308 needed to be considered holistically, rather than just the small stretch as a change in speed limit could affect the dynamics of traffic along the full route.

Councillor Sharpe suggested that officers and the police had more experience of managing speed limits than Councillors did. Roads often did have natural speed limits, the dual carriageway section into Maidenhead was 40mph and this suited the piece of road. Councillor Sharpe felt that either traffic calming measures or a speed camera were needed to enforce a new limit on the proposed section.

Councillor G Singh felt the section of road was narrow and considering the perspective of cyclists, it would be safer for this section to be 30mph.

Councillor Grove felt it was ludicrous that this section was the same speed as Braywick Road which was a dual carriageway. The traffic calming measures were already in place and could be used to enforce a new lower speed limit.

Councillor Grove proposed a recommendation that Cabinet reduced the speed limit on this section of the A308 to 30mph. This was seconded by Councillor G Singh.

A named vote was taken.

<b>Recommendation to Cabinet that the speed limit is reduced to 30mph (Motion)</b>	
Councillor Siân Martin	For
Councillor Gary Reeves	For
Councillor Clive Baskerville	For
Councillor Alison Carpenter	For
Councillor Jodie Grove	For
Councillor Asghar Majeed	For
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Kashmir Singh	Abstain
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
<b>Carried</b>	

**AGREED: That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommended that Cabinet reduce the speed limit on the Monkey Island Lane to M4 motorway bridge section of the A308 to 30mph.**

Work Programme

Mark Beeley, Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview and Scrutiny, suggested that an additional meeting could be added before January to consider further items on the Cabinet Forward Plan. Scoping documents had been completed on Tivoli and CIL, these would be shared with officers and the rest of the Panel shortly.

Councillor Majeed suggested that there could be a discussion on developments across the borough.

Councillor Carpenter said that she would like to review the Report It system and how it worked.

Mark Beeley said that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chair, Councillor Moriarty, had also raised similar concerns which he wished to explore.

Councillor Baskerville had some concerns about the performance of Tivoli.

Mark Beeley said that a scoping document had been drafted by Councillor Carpenter which incorporated many of the issues which had been reported. Any further issues not captured could be added in once the document was sent to the Panel.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.25 pm

Chair.....

Date.....