



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## COUNTY AND PARISHES LIAISON COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 3

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY AND PARISHES LIAISON COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 17 MARCH 2005 IN THE NEW IRELAND ROOM, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.34 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.32 PM.

### MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative	Organisation
Bill Chapple	Member - Buckinghamshire County Council (Chair)
Lin Hazell	Member - Buckinghamshire County Council
Andy Huxley	Member - Buckinghamshire County Council
Chester Jones	Member - Buckinghamshire County Council
Richard Pushman	Member - Buckinghamshire County Council
Mark Taylor	Member - Buckinghamshire County Council
David Goodenough	Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils
Des Knowles	Society of Local Council Clerks
Bill Lidgate	South Bucks Association of Local Councils
Patrick Martin	Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils
Irene Thompson	Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils
Barbara Wallis	Wycombe District Association of Local Councils
Kevin Allen	Babtie, Assistant Lighting Engineer
Graham Britten	Buckinghamshire County Council (Solicitor)
Alison Derrick	Buckinghamshire County Council (Area Co-ordinator – Chiltern and South Bucks)
Madeleine Howe	Buckinghamshire County Council (Area Co-ordinator – Aylesbury Vale)
Huw Jones	Buckinghamshire County Council (Head of Planning and Environment)
Sheilah Moore	Buckinghamshire County Council (Democratic Services Officer)
Steve Orchard	Buckinghamshire County Council (Aylesbury Vale Area Manager)
Chris Schwier	Buckinghamshire County Council (Highway Technician)
Phil Stonehewer	Buckinghamshire County Council (Group Manager Strategic Maintenance)
Darl Sweetland	Buckinghamshire County Council (Policy Support Officer)
Pat Ward	Buckinghamshire County Council (Economic Development Officer)
Chris Williams	Buckinghamshire County Council (Chief Executive Officer)

## **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING**

It was agreed that Bill Chapple would act as the Chairman for the meeting. The chairmanship of future meetings would alternate between the Deputy Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and the Chairman of Bucks Association of Local Councils (BALC).

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cherry Aston, Rodney Royston, Trevor Fowler, Ian Reed (Buckinghamshire County Council) and D Davies (Wycombe Association of Local Councils).

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none declared.

## **4. MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 19 October 2004 were confirmed as a correct record.

## **5. LOCAL AREA WORKING**

Chris Williams, Chief Executive Officer, BCC gave a short presentation on Local Area Working, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes. 5 distinct projects were being brought together with a focus on reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities. Local Area Working envisaged tailoring services to meet the needs of local communities, joining up public services at the local level, improving customer access to public services and enhancing the role of local members as community leaders. The role of Local Committees was to be broadened to enable delivery of those aspects of district local strategic partnership plans assigned to the County Council to implement. The County Council was committed to working with District Councils and the Police, Fire and Health Authorities to deliver joined up services and intended to revisit services to rural areas.

The implementation of Customer First heralded a new contact centre in Aylesbury and there were plans to develop one-stop-shops in other locations such as Buckingham, Wycombe and Amersham. Libraries and schools presented the opportunity for further customer access points. Other area-based initiatives included extended schools providing "edu-care" from 8.00am – 6.00pm, joined up services with the police and local area transport plans.

Area co-ordination and management arrangements were to be revised with Heads of Service twinned with County Council Members to facilitate the resolution of local issues. It was commented that representatives from a number of different BCC services had participated in networking events, which followed a speed-dating format. This had proved to be a very effective way for staff to find out more about the work of colleagues in other services. BCC hoped to pilot a similar event in other areas, possibly including representatives from the voluntary sector, police authorities and district councils.

Delegation to Parish and Town Councils was being piloted in Buckingham and was, at present, linked to Councils having Quality Parish Status. Mention was made of the Forbearance Fund which was still in operation but not well utilised.

Several factors had been taken account of when formulating a definition of a local community. These included catchment areas, population concentrations, a sense of identification, a local centre as a focal point and consistency with other boundaries. A map was circulated outlining the proposed boundaries of communities for the purposes of local area working. It was emphasised that these were in draft and currently being consulted on.

In the discussion that ensued the following comments were made:

- Consultation on the proposed boundaries would include County Council Members and key partners as well as discussions with Local Committees.
- As far as was possible, the proposed boundaries of local communities were coterminous with parish boundaries.
- Concern was expressed that transportation did not feature highly with respect to the definition of a local community. It was recognised that members of communities would utilise different modes of transportation and different routes depending on their circumstances.
- It was felt that not all schools would be suitable for the provision of extended “edu-care,” having insufficient capacity.
- Publicising the Forbearance Fund more widely might increase the uptake by Parishes, although it was noted that information on this was contained within the Fact File. Officers were proactive in terms of highlighting the existence of the fund to parishes requesting eligible schemes.
- All parishes were eligible to apply to the Forbearance Fund irrespective of whether or not they had obtained Quality Status.
- The importance of submitting bids early to Local Committees was emphasised in order to ensure prompt delivery avoid delays.
- There was currently no Parish Council representative from Little Marlow on the Wycombe District Council Local Strategic Partnership.
- Little Marlow had obtained Quality Status and had received a grant to update their computer systems. Barbara Wallis commented that the Parish might be able to deliver a one-stop-shop in Little Marlow and Chris Williams indicated that a member of the Customer First team would be in contact to discuss the matter further.
- Ms Wallis also requested further details on the proposed boundaries with respect to Little Marlow and it was agreed that an Ordinance Survey based map reflecting the boundaries would be forwarded to her.
- One Member expressed concern about the introduction of additional bureaucracy. By contrast examples of effective local area working were cited.
- David Goodenough welcomed the proposals as a means of improving communication between the providers and users of local services. He agreed to include an item in the BALC newsletter to facilitate discussion within the district associations. He requested that an electronic form of the map be forwarded to Irene Thompson at BALC.
- Chris Williams indicated that he or Gary Emmerson would be willing to give the presentation on Local Area Working at appropriate meetings and Barbara Wallis extended an invitation to the June meeting of the Wycombe Association of Local Councils.

**Chris Williams**

**Sheilah Moore**

**Sheilah Moore**

**Chris Williams**

## **6. COUNTY AND PARISHES CHARTER**

Steve Orchard, Area Manager for the Aylesbury Vale area, updated the Committee on the progress of parish charters within Buckinghamshire. Development of the charter had been delayed and was likely to be completed in May 2005 based on the DEFRA model charter. Steve Orchard confirmed that he would liaise with Irene Thompson from BALC before the final draft was issued. Des Knowles requested that a copy be forward to him when available.

**Steve Orchard**

The Committee was reminded that the advantages of this arrangement would be local ownership of local issues and local delivery of service. Quality parishes would be able to undertake work around the parish using their own staff and resources. BCC had to be confident that services that were devolved to quality parishes would be delivered to required standards.

BCC had been working closely with Buckingham Town Council, the first parish to gain Quality Status. A meeting had been held with the clerk to discuss areas of work that BCC could devolve to the town council. 7 potential areas had been identified:

- Tree maintenance
- Weed control
- Minor potholes
- Sign cleaning, repairs and removal of illegal signs
- Footpaths
- Hedge clearance and tree works
- Public transport notices

It was recognised that training would be required for the person/s undertaking these services. It had been estimated that one man with a vehicle could undertake these responsibilities working on a part-time basis. If the services of a BCC maintenance contractor were engaged to undertake the work, this would cost in the region of £16,000 - £17,000. It was suggested that these funds could be transferred to Buckingham Town Council to offset the cost of taking on these responsibilities.

## **7. BROCHURES AND LEAFLETS TO PARISHES**

A member commented that parish clerks were being inundated with brochures and glossy leaflets. Whilst relevant information was welcomed much of the material received was not pertinent and concerns were expressed about wastage and over-ordering of publications. Another Member commented that information received regarding meetings was often out of date.

In response, Carl Welham, Head of Communications and Consultation, highlighted that re-ordering publications was much more expensive than ordering a larger number in the first instance although every attempt was made to estimate required quantities accurately. The remit of the Communications teams was to reach more people and it was important to ensure parishes received all necessary information. Although much communication was now electronic in nature, many people preferred to receive paper copies of documentation. Printing leaflets centrally on recycled paper was more environmentally friendly than e-mailing documents that were subsequently printed out on home printers. The County Council had a well-organised distribution system in place and notice of all public meetings was posted 5 clear working days before the meeting. Anyone not receiving notice of meetings in good time should contact Democratic Services.

There was some discussion around the Bucksonline portal and the prospective use of this by Parish Councils. David Goodenough explained that the system was not appropriate for Parish Council use, and so it was not being recommended by BALC. It was agreed that the matter would be pursued outside of the meeting.

**Dean  
Taylor/David  
Goodenough**

## 8. LOCAL DELIVERY VEHICLE

Huw Jones, Head of Planning and Environment, reported that a Local Delivery Vehicle for Aylesbury had been set up as a company limited by guarantee and it was anticipated, would deliver the strategic delivery plan within four months. Mr Gregory Lomax, the newly appointed Managing Director of Delivery 2031 was in the process of meeting with various stakeholders. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has announced that 3 bids for Capital Infrastructure Investment had been successfully included in the final shortlist. The total value of this investment in Aylesbury will be approximately £20 million. The individual schemes are:

- An Aylesbury public transport hub (£11.5 million)
- Aylesbury north station for Berryfields housing (£5 million)
- Southcourt bridge (£2.5 million)

An additional £234 million had been earmarked for growth areas. David Goodenough expressed concern that Mr Lomax had indicated at the Local Committee meeting that he was ignoring rural industry and focussing on urban development. It was explained that there were constraints on the remit of the local delivery vehicle and expenditure was restricted to capital projects.

## 9. STREET LIGHTING

Des Knowles, Clerk to Amersham Town Council enquired as to why the County Council provided footway lighting in some parishes but not in others and why, as far as he could ascertain, there was no financial adjustment to compensate for this different level of service. Amersham maintained footway lighting at the expense of the parish, raising £30,000 by way of the parish precept, whilst Chesham and Aylesbury had the service provided by BCC. Graham Britten, BCC solicitor, explained that District and Parish Councils were responsible for lighting the footways but it was possible to transfer this to the Highways authority with their agreement. Mr Knowles enquired further as to why the council tax levied by BCC was the same in all cases and there was no financial adjustment for the different levels of service. He asserted that this constituted double taxation as defined in Appendix 3 of the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme Guide. It was agreed that Officers would discuss the matter further with Mr Knowles outside of the meeting.

**Graham  
Britten/Des  
Knowles**

With reference to page 5 of the previous Minutes, a BALC representative indicated ongoing issues between certain Parish Councils and EDF Energy. Kevin Allen, from Jacobs Babtie, indicated that EDF Energy had recently appointed a new Customer Relations' Manager, Iain Dilley. In response to this appointment it was suggested that a meeting should be held between EDF Energy, Jacobs Babtie and a representative from BALC in an attempt to rectify outstanding issues. Mr Allen agreed to liaise with Irene Thompson in the regard.

**Kevin  
Allen/Phil  
Stonehewer/  
Irene  
Thompson**

In response to a question regarding fault reporting and numbering of County Council street lighting, it was commented that within the proposed BCC Highway Lighting Policy, currently under review, it has been suggested that all BCC street lighting will have both an identification number and a telephone number attached in a suitable location. In the interim, improvements to the way columns are currently being numbered will be made by using reflective adhesive numbers where necessary.

## **10. SMALL TOWNS INITIATIVES SCHEME**

Pat Ward, Economic Development Officer, explained that the small towns initiative scheme had been launched in April. There was now a single budget that combined the previous regeneration and rural development programme budgets. Previous funding had been allocated on the basis of need or deprivation, but this was no longer the case. Local needs could now be met by local partnerships, on the condition that they were not public sector driven. Funding decisions could now be made at local level and confirmed by SEEDA. Towns were only able to submit a bid once and grants would range from £40,000 to £240,000. Any funding awarded would need to be matched by funds from the community or a local authority. Indicative funding for Buckinghamshire amounted to £875,000 to be allocated over a 7-year period and 19 towns within Buckinghamshire were eligible. SEEDA had provided £20,000 for the employment of a market towns co-ordinator and Malcolm Godwin would be supporting towns to develop funding bids.

BALC offered to publicise the scheme in their newsletter and Pat Ward agreed to liase with Irene Thompson in this regard.

**Pat Ward/  
Irene  
Thompson**

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

It was reported that there was now a BALC representative on the Luton/London Airport Consultative Committee who was working closely with the County and District representatives.

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 25 October 2005 at 10.00am in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury.

**Please note starting time.**

**CHAIRMAN**