



## Buckinghamshire County Council

# Minutes

### OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON  
COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14  
DECEMBER 2005 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY,  
COMMENCING AT 10.01 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.55 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr R C Pushman (Chairman), Mr B G Allen, Mrs M A Baldwin, Mr H Cadd, Mr M Edmonds, Mr D A B Green, Mr A Hill, Mr D Meacock, Mr C Jones, Mrs P Lindsley, Mr Z Mohammed and Mr M Tett.

#### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr J Warder MBE (Chiltern District Council)

#### **OTHERS PRESENT**

Mr D Sweetland Policy Officer  
Mrs K Jones Democratic Services Officer

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr D Polhill

#### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported apologies for absence from Mr R Woollard (Mr Bruce Allen was substituting for this meeting only), Mr A Oxley (Mrs Mary Baldwin was substituting for this meeting only) and Mr D G Meacock.

#### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

## 1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Community and Environmental Services held on 23 November 2005, copies of which had been circulated, were agreed and signed as a correct record.

## 2 MATTERS ARISING

Members were updated on the following:

### **Anti Social Behaviour Task Group**

The Vice-Chairman reported that the first meeting of the Group would be held in the New Year. A member asked how the districts deal with queries on Anti-Social behaviour. The member from Chiltern District Council reported that they have direct contact with Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) officers. Another member reported that he attends meetings of Princes Risborough Town Council and issues are passed on to the police.

Another member reported that Housing Associations work in partnership with Chiltern District Council (CDC) and he suggested that the member from CDC presents a paper to a future meeting describing what has been done and how it has worked. It was agreed that this was a useful suggestion.

10.10am Mrs P Lindsley joined the meeting.

The Vice Chairman emphasised that it was important that young people are not labelled as being anti social.

### **District Council Overview & Scrutiny Work**

There was nothing to report.

## 3 CONGESTION TASK GROUP - TACKLING CONGESTION REPORT

Members received the draft report of the Congestion Task Group and made the following points:

- To what extent is the Congestion Task Group working with the District Councils on issues such as the closure of car parks in Wycombe.
- Another member suggested that efforts were being concentrated on getting traffic moving and that the towns were being overlooked. He cautioned that urban residents should not be disadvantaged.

Marcus Rogers replied that officers in the Transportation Service were working actively with Wycombe District Council, the Eden project and the Southern area to try and improve parking in Wycombe. Members were advised that in the period to 5 December more than 5,000 passengers had used the Park and Ride. BCC have been required to highlight additional parking needs in Wycombe by the end of February 2006.

Marcus noted that there was a need to look at congestion corridors and improve access and safety. He acknowledged that mistakes had been made on the Oxford Road and hoped that this would be rectified before 31 March.

In response to a question about consultation on traffic lights the committee were advised that local members have been consulted. The Task Group had been briefed about the arguments for traffic lights or roundabouts and concluded that traffic lights

were usually preferable. The Vice-Chairman congratulated Marcus on the success of the Wycombe Park and Ride. She noted the following points:

- There was an urgent need for a facility in Hughenden Road and from Hazlemere. She asked if there were plans to extend the initiative.
- She explained that in her opinion there was a time lag with signs.
- There had been a lack of consultation on the London Road.
- Was there an increased likelihood of congestion as a consequence of the Highways work at Handy Cross?
  
- Marcus replied that possible schemes included Terriers and Wellsbourne but that future plans were subject to receiving approval from the District Council.
- Without signage there was a danger that people would drive round looking for spaces. He explained that there would always be a time lag with traffic signs.
- Consultation had taken place on London Road.
- Marcus acknowledged that there was a potential increase in congestion at Handy Cross. He hoped that there would be significant improvements after disruption of one year.

The Chairman noted that in Wycombe the demand was for short visits to the town centre and he suggested that attention should be given to the timing of visits and the impact on the villages that would be without a bus service. Marcus replied that the purpose of the Wycombe Park and Ride was to support the long-term vitality of the town.

The member from CDC noted that in his opinion there was poor provision for disabled in Buckinghamshire and that this needs to be addressed. He also suggested traffic roads in light were not as helpful as they just stopped the traffic.

10.42am Mr M Tett joined the meeting

The Policy Officer reported that the Task Group would be looking at alternatives to the car in the New Year. A member suggested that consideration be given to using alternatives to cars for example Terminal 5 air track. He added that congestion did not end at the county boundaries. Marcus replied that BCC supported that cross rail project and that Buckinghamshire was one of the few counties where there had been an increase in bus patronage.

The Chairman invited a member of the public to speak to the meeting. Mr Collier explained that in his opinion a bypass was needed in Aylesbury and that traffic lights were needed on the bridge in Burcott Lane because it had been recommended as a short cut by the AA and was on satellite navigation. Marcus acknowledged the strength of feeling and he recognised the issue but explained that funding was not currently available. Marcus said that the list of schemes recommended by the Task Group would help the Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning on funding.

The Chairman thanked Marcus for attending the meeting and explained that members appreciated this.

## **5 ENVIRONMENT INSPECTION – IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Chairman welcomed Jan Britton who was attending the meeting on behalf of Neil Gibson. Jan explained that the Environment Inspection took place over 2 weeks in August and September and covered the BCC's transport, strategic planning and waste services. The inspectors rated the service as 'good 2 star' with promising

prospects for improvement and stated that BCC has clear aims and works well with its partners. The inspectors made 3 main recommendations with timescales for resolution. The Leaders' Advisory Group will consider the Inspectors Report and the Improvement Plan on 9 January 2006.

Other issues covered by the report were that the joint waste strategy does not effectively address the impact of landfill diversion targets, that household waste recycling centres have limited capacity and are not effectively meeting customer needs and that BCC cannot demonstrate that its waste minimisation initiatives are having an impact on reducing waste growth in the county.

The member from CDC reported that as a result of publicising schemes recycling has been increased to 35% and composting has been increased by 2%. He advised that it was feasible to deliver 50 to 60% recycling and compost rates in Buckinghamshire. He congratulated the county on cooperating with the districts to move things forward. Members were advised that the Audit Commission had acknowledged this cooperation.

A member expressed surprise that there was no evidence of consultation between the districts on shared goals. The member from CDC replied that discussions were taking place. He explained that the cost of LATs was a huge problem, and that Aylesbury Vale District Council would be using twin wheelie bins along with the other councils in the district.

A member expressed surprise that BCC did not have a corporate strategy for sustainable development that articulates short, medium and long-term priorities. She asked when and if there would be an opportunity for members to scrutinise the plans given that the report would be presented to LAG on 9 January. Jan replied that it was anticipated that there would be a policy in June/July 2006 followed by a report to Cabinet.

A member asked if the poor rating for sustainable development had been anticipated and if there was a clear understanding of the meaning of sustainable development. Jan replied that the officers had been surprised because they had been working on planning, waste and transportation and at the time of the inspection the focus was more on corporate environmental inspection. The officers worked hard to reposition themselves in order to answer the questions. The inspectors wanted an awareness of corporate responsibility for example 50% of paper was recycled whilst only 5% of recycled paper is used by BCC. Jan acknowledged that cost rather than environmental issues drove these decisions.

The Policy Officer referred members to the Congestion Task Group report which was the first to include summaries five impact assessments – including sustainability – that would be required for Cabinet and Cabinet Member reports.

The Chairman thanked Jan for attending the meeting and for deputising. The Policy Officer suggested that he prepares a summary of the issues raised at the meeting. This was agreed.

## **6 YOUTH SERVICES**

The Chairman welcomed Colin Pollard Youth Services Manager to the meeting. Colin explained that there was good news to report on youth services because the service had continued to grow in order to meet government targets. The team included 10 new workers to be added to the current 46 full time staff and 140 part time staff.

A directory of youth services was tabled and Colin invited members to contact the Policy Officer to arrange visits to youth centres in January.

The Vice Chairman explained that the aim was to examine whether there was parity of provision for young people in Buckinghamshire. In response to a question Colin explained that BCC supports the voluntary sector through grants for village youth clubs for example.

The Chairman thanked Colin Pollard for attending the meeting.

11.57am Mr B G Allen left the meeting.

## **7 FLOODING RISKS AND THE BUCKINGHAM FLOOD DEFENCE SCHEME**

The Chairman welcomed Nigel Woonton Area Flood Risk Manager and Colin Patten Project Manager to the meeting. Members received a presentation on the Environment Agency Flood Defence Flooding.

Members were advised that the Grant in Aid (GiA) was received via DEFRA and that the local levy was raised through the Regional Flood Defence Committee. The allocation of GiA funding criteria is based on economics, people and environmental criteria.

The funding criteria for Buckingham is as follows:

The criteria for economics is determined from a Benefit/Cost ratio of 2:3, for Buckingham the economic score was 4 points.

The people score is determined by the number of dwellings that benefit per unit cost of defence. The number of people protected reflected priority score rather than house values and is modified to reflect perceived degree of risk to personal safety and vulnerability (based on scale of economic deprivation). The total people score for Buckingham was 5 points.

The environmental score reflects any direct benefit to national or locally designated environmental sites or where a scheme could contribute to National Biodiversity Action Plan habitat targets. The environmental score was 1 point making a total score of 10 points.

The current DEFRA priority scores for schemes which may receive funding are as follows:

2005/6	19 points
2006/7	19 points
2007/8	15 points.

Members were advised that the Environment Agency is still trying to promote Buckingham within the programme and have identified potential expenditure from 2008/09.

A member expressed concern that before the flooding in 1998 funding had been identified for a flood defence scheme in Buckingham. He explained that in 1998 76 properties had been affected by flooding this included houses in Well Street, Tingewick Road, Nelson Street and Forge Street. In addition the University of Buckingham and the halls of residence could also be affected in future. Members were advised the conservation area of old Buckingham town is also vulnerable to flooding.

A member expressed reservation about the accuracy of the research performed by the Environment Agency. Nigel Woonton replied that the Environment Agency wants to undertake the scheme but must operate within the rules. The member replied that a start date had been given and that this raised expectations with local residents. Nigel Woonton explained that the Environment Agency has to try and manage national expectations, he expressed disappointment that members had not been consulted and hoped that they would be.

A local member was invited to speak to the meeting and he acknowledged the difficulties in allocating funding. He explained that the points system would not be a comfort to residents and he noted that approval had been given to build 200 houses initially in an area that floods regularly and that this may increase to 400 – 500 new houses. Nigel Woonton agreed to investigate and to copy the response to Hedley Cadd and David Polhill. Members were advised that there had been objections to one of the flood alleviation proposals from local residents.

The Vice Chairman sympathised with the members because she lives near the river Rye that floods regularly.

A member asked how the risk profile would be adjusted if there was a flood the following day. Members were advised that the frequency rating would not be reassessed and is based on rainfall amounts using the flood estimation handbook. The severity or frequency of flooding doesn't come into prioritisation. Members were advised that the flood plain maps are updated annually.

12.52pm Mr M Tett and Mrs P Lindsley left the meeting

The Chairman thanked Nigel Woonton and Brian Patten for attending the meeting and asked members to note the contents of the report from Jim Stevens on the Highway Flooding Update.

The Policy Officer agreed to draft a letter for the Chairman to write to John Bercow MP to update him on the meeting. The member from CDC noted that there was no reference to work with Bibal on flood retention.

## **8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 25 January 2006 at 10am in Mezzanine Room 1.

**MR R C PUSHMAN  
CHAIRMAN**