

D REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

Community Safety

- Buckinghamshire County Council hosted a Council Leaders Seminar on Thursday 28 June 2001 with Sir Charles Pollard. The aim was to support key members in their crime and disorder reduction role.
- A meeting between Sir Charles Pollard and Buckinghamshire County Council will take place in the autumn, another sign of the continuing benefit of this working relationship.
- There has been considerable and welcome publicity surrounding the successful Domestic Violence Bid. It is hoped to recruit two co-ordinators soon.
- A very successful Information Sharing Conference was held on Monday 2 July which was attended by 50 people from various organisations.
- The Links Conference on 12 July will inform participants about the work of Community Safety; the Drug Action Team; the Youth Offending Team and Connexions, and how the partner organisations link in. Ninety people from a wide range of organisations attended.
- Considerable work is being undertaken by BCC officers to support the four district areas CS audits. These completed audits will be out for consultation in the early autumn.

Countryside

- All countryside access sites and country parks re-opened post-FMD
- We have had 17,650 hits on the Foot and Mouth website page as of 9 September since it was set up. At its height it was averaging 950 hits per day.

- Rural Forum held on 26 June at Green Park, to cover the revision of Rural Strategy. Working with BCA to complete through July.
- All public rights of way reopened with effect from 29 May following FMD
- 3 month backlog of Rights of Way work that built up during Foot and Mouth crisis; maintenance on the ground, correspondence in the office and legal matters (diversions/modification Orders/enforcement work etc)
- Total costs to Countryside Service to date for Foot and Mouth stands at £56,200
- Langley Stakeholders meeting held 10 July. Public consultation to take place during August on the development of a Restoration Management Plan and supporting documents through September
- George Green Gates - restoration should be complete by end August.
- Bernwood Project launch/signing of the Project "Charter" on 12 July. Developing Project after 12 July, ie taking forward some practical actions (this could include bid for Brill Windmill).
- Landscape Plan Part 1 due back from printers end July. Distribution through August. There will be a meeting/seminar to discuss Part 2.
- Working with Bucks Nature Conservation Forum (BNCF) to promote Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and develop key projects. Possible Local Nature Reserve project (New Opportunities Fund); possible biodiversity co-ordinator to take on BAP monitoring/generic promotion role; possible Trust status for BNCF; supporting Bucks Community Action on developing Community Biodiversity Toolkit for local communities.)
- Finalisation of Wildlife Sites Selection Criteria.
- Preparations for outcome of Whiteleaf Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid. Final consents; contract details, etc, ready to take forward when HLF notify of outcome October.

- Chilterns AONB - finalisation of new management plan.
- Tourism Action Plan - working with Economic Development, on new actions (completion date not set).
- 15 September - Bucks Woodland Forum Annual Conference at Green Park - this year's theme is biodiversity.

Trading Standards

- 1 The authorities broader role in terms of Foot and Mouth and land and footpath closures effectively came to a conclusion during late May. There remains an impact on Trading Standards in that as the Animal Health authority the division continues to issue licences for the movement of livestock for slaughter under the measures put in place to prevent the spread of the disease. The licensing system and other Foot and Mouth issues are currently taking up the equivalent of one full time equivalent post. It is likely that this will continue until the disease had been eradicated and may be continued thereafter as part of any new disease prevention regime.
- 2 The Trading Standards division was subject to a Best Value Inspection by the Audit Commission during June and has received the interim challenge, the authority has now responded to this. The draft report is expected sometime in the next few weeks and it is likely that the final report and judgement as to the quality of the service and whether it is likely to improve will be published sometime during September.
- 3 During June the Head of Trading Standards and I attended the National Trading Standards Conference in Cardiff. The service received an award from The International Federation of Spirit Producers; for their role against substitution and counterfeiting.

Libraries, Information and Archives

- **Change in the age of adult library registration:** The service is requesting that the age at which customers can register as adult library members be reduced from 18 years to 16 years of age.

- **Development of Wing Library:** The library service is currently working with Wing Parish Council on an externally funded project that will see Wing Library (currently based in cramped accommodation in the Village Hall) re-housed in a purpose built extension to the Hall.
- **Upgrade of County Library Computer system:** A key decision has been taken to upgrade the existing ALSi system to the new Bibliomondo version. This will considerably improve the range and efficiency of services available to library customers.
- **The People's Network:** Work has started on this *Flagship Project*, which, when fully rolled out, will lead to increased and enhanced IT provision in public libraries via the County Council's broadband network.
- **Funding for reading development programme:** A grant of £2,000 has been secured from Southern Arts to implement a programme of reading related activities with older people attending day care centres in Bourne End and Denham.
- **Work begins on the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies:** The ambitious plan to create a Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies by merging the County Record Office and the Local Studies Library is now being put into effect. Work has started on this Flagship Project, which will make use of a £463,500 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to extensively refurbish and develop the Local Studies/County Records Office area of County Hall.
- **Homework Centre at the County Museum:** A special Library Homework Centre is being created at the County Museum in Aylesbury. This will use existing resources to provide a range of books, other reference materials and computers to help children with their homework. It will offer enhanced opening hours, including Saturdays and Sundays, in line with Museum opening times and improve access to the Libraries and Heritage Service, particularly to traditional non-users.

Museum

- 4 Work on the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies commenced on the 2 July. The contractors have already demolished some inner walls in the public area and stripped out redundant piping and ducting from the corridors. By the end of July, the new Strongroom 6 will be fitted out and documents from Strongroom 5 moved in so that the next phase of the work can commence. The work is due to be completed by the 21 December. The new facility will provide seating for 49 searchers in the Local Studies area, 22 in the Archives Search Room and 25 more in the Education Room. An additional eight computers are due to be installed in the Centre as part of the Peoples Network programme.
- 5 The County Museum is enjoying a very busy period with the Roald Dahl Gallery fully booked by school parties well into the autumn term. Work is in progress on the next major exhibition, "Leaves on the Line", which will trace the history and impact of the Metropolitan Railway through the Chilterns to Aylesbury.
- 6 Work is progressing on an extension to the café at the County Museum. The design draw's inspiration from the modern glass entrance to the Museum, built in 1995 and from the Roald Dahl Gallery itself. A provisional plan has been presented to the Bucks Archaeological Society, the Friends of the Museum and the Aylesbury Vale District Council listed building officers. The Café will be built in January in time for the busy half-term holiday in February 2002.
- 7 Entry charges to the Museum will cease from 1 September 2001 however, the museum is already offering free family tickets as a pre-cursor to the event. The removal of entry charges has been taken in advance of expected national guidelines.

Youth & Community

- The Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (MOB) partnership for ConneXions has a new Chief Executive Adrian Bell who will be based in Buckinghamshire County Hall, second floor and started on 2 July. The Chair of the (MOB) board is Roy Collis (Ex-Head of Bucks Library Service).

- Buckinghamshire was successful in the first round of ConneXions special bids with contracts awarded to Wycombe work with Asian/African Caribbean young people and with some adjustment the Skidz project all with a Youth and Community input.
- At the last Local Management committee meeting on 14 June at Green Park it was agreed to have in September/October a "Making ConneXions Work" conference.
- During July Careers staff and Youth and Community staff will be visiting schools to update and ascertain the needs for either a Youth worker or careers member of staff or both to deliver additional ConneXions work with the school.

Emergency Planning

- 8 The team has successfully relocated to its new home in the basement of Old County Offices. This move coincided with a lull in activity, which will hopefully continue, since the relaxation of foot and mouth precautions.

Registration

- 9 This service continues to flourish as a frontline service meeting the people of Bucks everyday, a role they perform with great skill.

Gypsy Service/Waste

- 10 As Cabinet Member, I will continue to press Central Government to carryout an across the board review of these areas and provide Local Authorities with clear policies to deal with the ongoing situation they face.

Adult Continuing Education

- 11 The Learning + Skills Council and the Adult Learning Inspectorate are beginning to clarify the monitoring and inspection arrangements which will apply to the new post 16 sector.

12 The Learning + Skills Council has indicated that they will carrying out regular reviews (three or four times a year have been suggested) of all funded providers against the following criteria:

- Delivery of Volume of Education
- Quality of Education
- Equality of Opportunity
- Health & Safety
- Quality of Leadership and Management
- Continuous Improvement
- Quality of Strategic Planning
- Financial Assurance
- Data Management
- Other Priorities

13 Continuing Education, along with other providers funded by the LSC, is currently undertaking a thorough Self-Assessment process. This will result in a Service Self-Assessment Report, and associated Development Plan which will be agreed with the local LSC in the Autumn.

14 Pilot Inspections of Adult & Community Learning are being undertaken by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which will provide useful guidance on future inspection arrangements. Continuing Education is not one of the pilot Services, but is planning an Internal Inspection of one of its Curriculum Groups early next year.

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