



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 FEBRUARY 2012, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.05 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.39 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr J Elfes, in the Chair

Mr D Briggs, Mr N Harris, Mr C Hurworth, Mr A T A Lambourne, Mr R Pushman and Mr J Coombe

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr M Walker, Mr J Clark, Mr S Kidd, Ms H Beevers and Ms J Taylor

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Peter Challis, Viv Lynch and Gavin Caspersz.

Members were asked to note that Mr Plumbridge, who had been invited to attend for Item 6, Crow Act 2000 Restrictions Review – Consultation, had advised he was unable to attend.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 NOVEMBER 2011 TO BE CONFIRMED

The minutes of the Meeting held on 2 November 2011 were confirmed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. PLACE SERVICE RESTRUCTURE

Anne James was welcomed to the meeting.

The Officer talked members through the Place Service Restructure. She said that when considering the restructure the aim was to create an integrated service with an overarching management team. The restructure has brought together transport, planning, environment and property portfolios. She advised that the localities element has been kept separate although there is close working with the team.

Anne said that there had been a 3 month consultation and the whole structure was viewed to create flexible groupings of people. The Officer then talked members through the structure chart highlighting that John Lamb is the Divisional Director of the Place Service and is supported by 9 senior managers. The Forum was informed that the structure was approved in December 2011 and that the recruitment process started soon after which is nearing the end. The main movement has been with the Rights of Way team which has moved from the Planning portfolio to Transport for Buckinghamshire. It was felt that there were many synergies and this move enables closer integration with the maintenance work and enforcement of the Rights of Way structure. Rights of Way are within the Integrated Ringway Jacobs and Buckinghamshire County Council (RJ & BCC) team which Anne has responsibility for. The Definitive Map and Strategic Rights of Way will stay within the Planning and Compliance service.

Sandy Kidd advised that he had been interim manager for the Natural Environment and Historic Environment teams for the past year which included Jonathan Clark's role. He said that the Definitive Map role will come within his team and advised that recruitment for 2 assistant posts is currently taking place (one of which it was commented was Helen Beaver's post and the other a current vacancy).

The Officers then invited questions.

Neil Harris asked if Rights of Way work would be kept as a priority and Anne said that one of the strengths of the RJ & BCC team is that there is a defined budget, the business plan has been developed with priorities identified so that it can be clearly understood.

Richard Pushman highlighted that the Council was moving more to a commissioning model rather than being a provider and said that finance was a driving factor. He acknowledged that it had been a difficult time for staff and that there had been a lot of change.

The Chairman enquired how far the integration went and asked if staff would remain BCC employees. Anne said that road maintenance staff were TUPED across. She said a lot of staff had retained their BCC status and work within the integrated alliance. She commented that her manager was a Ringway Jacobs (RJ) employee. Anne said that the service is so integrated it is in fact very difficult to know who is a BCC or RJ employee. The Forum was informed that John Colet was the Alliance Lead, he is responsible for delivering the contract which was agreed and approved by the BCC team such as John Lamb and Sean Rooney.

John Coombe asked where Mike Walker fitted into the structure and Mike advised that his post had been removed. The Chairman enquired who would be dealing with issues previously dealt with by Mike and in response it was highlighted that it would be similar to the present arrangements and that it would be Jonathan Clark for Strategic Access issues and the Definitive Map Officer for definitive map queries. Anne assured members that Officers would smooth the way.

Alan Lambourne asked if Parish Councils would still have direct access to Rights of Way Officers, to which Anne reassured him they would.

The Chairman enquired how the service would look to the public and asked if they

needed to do anything. Anne said as far as the public would be concerned it is just a structural change and they will continue to speak to the same Officers. Chris Hurworth asked where volunteers fitted into the structure and commented that he hated to think that it was too complicated or bureaucratic for them. David Briggs said that volunteers would be difficult to fit into the new structure as it is run by contractors who have a set price and get paid for the work. Anne said that this is addressed through the business planning process. The Chairman commented that he would not want contractors to profit from volunteers work. Anne assured members that senior managers were aware of the situation.

The Chairman asked Anne James if she was involved in the structure change as a participant or landed with the changes. Anne said that she was on the project management team, managing the practical activity of the organisation but was not part of the restructure team.

Anne was asked to explain the reasoning behind Rights of Way sitting within the resilience manager block, not the operations team, and Anne said Resilience team works closely with the operations team and Rights of Way has better synergies with transport, as Rights of Way does not only do operations work and it was important they stay linked with the enforcement side.

6. CROW ACT 2000 RESTRICTIONS REVIEW - CONSULTATION

Jonathan Clark advised that the Forum was consulted last year on the issue, but that Natural England had consulted too early and were therefore consulting again. Members were shown a map of the area and Jonathan talked members through the proposed restrictions. He said that the LAF had originally agreed to the previous restrictions, but that there had been a feeling that they may have been too restrictive.

Jonathan drew members attention to the three proposed restrictions:

1. Prevent disturbance to game on shoot days and the day before a shoot and people restricted to the fenced route for up to 20 days during the shoot season.
2. Dogs restricted to fenced route 1 May to 1 October, due to disturbance of cows and calves
3. Prevent disturbance to game during the game season. Dogs restricted to fenced route from 2 October to 1 February. If restriction 2 was revoked, restriction 3 would need to reassessed to cover the pre-shoot season from 15 July)

Members discussed the restrictions and it was commented that diligence would need to be exerted regarding putting up restriction notices prior to the shoots. David suggested that a list with the dates of the shoots for the year could be displayed at the start of the shoot season to inform members of the public. It was further suggested that this could be included on the Parish and County Council websites.

It was highlighted that restrictions can be withdrawn if there is evidence that the shoots were not taking place. David commented that the restrictions on dogs appeared to be very restrictive. Chris said that the land is quite remote from houses and that there was unlikely to be a huge numbers of people using the land and that there is already a restriction of people on the land.

Following discussion the following recommendations were suggested:

- There should be signposting off Chinnor Road and Bottom Road

- Clipframes with maps and information on the restrictions should be displayed at each access points
- Re-instatment of open access plastic markers
- Reminder that the consultation ends on 29 April 2012
- The restriction on dogs is too onerous

The Chairman agreed to respond to the consultation on behalf of the LAF.

7. 2012 OLYMPICS - DORNEY ROWING VENUE

The Chairman welcomed Corinne Waldron, BCC Area Rights of Way Officer.

Members received a presentation and key points were as follows:

- The Thames Path footpath was closed for safety reasons.
- A new surfaced track along the Thames Path at Dorney was installed.
- A temporary bridge across the Thames from Windsor to Dorney Lake will be installed for the Olympic events.
- Rights of Way improvements in the area are being considered to reduce the amount of traffic.
- 300 residents signed a petition regarding the lack of legacy in the area.
- Funding streams have been looked at, quotes obtained and an application sent to the Environment agency (EA), which takes approximately 3 months for approval. The EA gave consent, Natural England provided £15k of funding and the Olympic Delivery Authority agreed to extend their surfacing works by 200m which allowed the Council to join up the works.
- There will however be no cycling waymarks.

8. LOCAL ACCESS FORUM - HUDDLE WEBSITE DEMONSTRATION

Members received a demonstration of the Huddle website.

Following the demonstration Neil asked how members could log on. In response it was highlighted that Jonathan would need to send the terms and conditions to a member, who would then agree to the terms and receive a link to Huddle. It was commented that at present only three members could have access to the website, although the aim is to work towards all members of local access forums having access.

John Elfes already had access and it was agreed that Neil Harris and David Briggs be signed up for access.

Action: Jonathan Clark

9. RIGHTS OF WAY GROUP REPORT

Members had received the Rights of Way Group report.

Helen Beevers took members through the Rights of Way Applications and John Coombe enquired about the locations of the footpaths for Lacey Green, Chartridge and Taplow. Jonathan said he would discuss the locations with the member outside of the meeting. The member asked that where there is an application to upgrade a footpath the path number be listed.

Action: Jonathan Clark

The Chairman enquired if there were any triggers for Village Green Applications such as proposed developments and Helen said that the majority are triggered due to proposed major developments.

Joanne Taylor then took Members through the Rights of Way Operations Update and provided the following updates:

- It is unclear at present how clearance will be set up in the new structure.
- BCC will be kindly asking the Chiltern Society and Ramblers' Association for help in carrying out the next Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) survey. The BVPI is a good indicator to see how the network is faring and provides a benchmark against other Local Authorities.

Jonathan Clark took Members through the Strategic Access Update and the following updates were provided:

- Initially 66 rights of way were severed by the proposed High Speed 2 rail route however this may now be reduced following the announced changes. There will be an increase in land bridges. Work is ongoing and the Forum will be kept updated.

Alan enquired about East West Rail and whether this would have any effect on rights of way. Jonathan advised that this was still at the planning stage and that he had not yet been approached regarding this. He advised the Forum that members may like to keep a watching brief

10. LAF MEMBERS REPORT

Members had received the LAF Members' Report.

The following updates were provided:

Neil Harris advised members of the new Twitter and Facebook accounts launched by the National Trust Rangers in the Chilterns and gave a demonstration. He advised that the sites are updated regularly and said that they can be used to advise the public on what is going on and is an additional way of getting more volunteers and support. He advised that smartphones also added flexibility to existing technology.

Jonathan advised in relation to the 'Paths for Communities' that local communities will be able to bid for funds directly to Natural England and suggested that the Forum might like to be involved to put forward their support. He said that the County Council would not be eligible to apply, but that Parish Councils and partners would be able to. Jonathan said he would keep members informed and asked for any ideas or suggestions to be forwarded to him.

Sandy Kidd gave an update on the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and the workshop held at Green Park. The key points were:

- Land Use Consultants have been appointed and have been holding roadshows.
- At the workshop the key issues which the LNP should focus on and the benefits were considered
- A second workshop is to be held at AVDC offices
- The LAF should be aware of the LNP and how a LNP would interface with the

LAF and other Rights of Way organisations.

David said that there were many people at the workshop with diverse interests and that it will be a difficult job to mould the LNP to suit all requirements. He said that other LNPs across the country will be competing for funding, etc and that the LAF needs to get behind the LNP to make it work. Sandy said that the funding is for capacity building and that the government says that LNPs should be self sustaining. He commented that one of the difficulties is to get an organisation to be a big hitter whilst also becoming self sustaining. He commented that the Chiltern Conservation Board provides a successful model for a future LNP.

The Chairman asked who would pay and Sandy said this was likely to be LAs and partners. He said that business propositions were being sought although these were in the early stage and would take time to develop.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The South East Local Access Forum Conference will be held on 22 May 2012. Jonathan advised that he would contact members to see if anyone would like to attend.

The Chairman thanked Mike Walker and said it was an unexpected loss of someone in the organisation which the Forum relied on. He said that he believed the system would miss him and commented that Mike had set up the Forum, provided invaluable advice and kept the Forum going. The Chairman and members wished Mike well for the future. Mike thanked the Chairman and said that there had been good continuity on the Forum and that their enthusiasm for Rights of Way was incredible.

12. DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 July 2012, 10am, Mezzanine Room 3, County Hall, Aylesbury.

Chairman