

ACTION NOTES

MEETING:	Chesham Local Area Forum
DATE:	13 October 2009 7.00 pm to 8.53 pm
LOCATION	Cholesbury Village Hall

Present:	John Axon (Ashley Green Parish Council), Mohammad Bhatti (Buckinghamshire County Council), Patricia Birchley (Buckinghamshire County Council), Nigel Blomfield (Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Council), Chris Brown (Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Council), Noel Brown (Buckinghamshire County Council) (Chairman), Joan Lherbier (Chartridge Parish Council) and Keith Platt (Latimer Parish Council)
In Attendance:	Alison Derrick, Tim Fowler, Eric Meek, Kerry Stevens, Helen Wailling and Louise Whitney
Apologies:	See below.

Item	ISSUES RAISED
1	<p>WELCOME / APOLOGIES</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Elaine Bamford (CDC), Michael Brand (BCC), Justine Fulford (BCC), Peter Jones (BCC) and Merrin Molesworth (Chesham Town Council).</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Cholesbury Parish Council for the welcome to Cholesbury Village Hall.</p>
2	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were none.</p>
3	<p>WINTER MAINTENANCE REPORT</p> <p>The Forum received the Winter Maintenance Report.</p> <p>Tim Fowler (Area Maintenance Manager North, Transport for Buckinghamshire) told Members the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extensive exercise had been carried out several years ago using a risk assessment matrix which scored roads in terms of traffic flow, gradient, collision record etc. • The 'cut-off' line for gritting was based on resources available. • There were 3300 km of roads in Buckinghamshire, and approximately 40% of these were salted each year on a precautionary basis (approximately 1375km). • Roads not falling into Priority 1 were placed in categories 2 or 3, depending on the matrix score. Roads in categories 2 or 3 were gritted only when there were prolonged periods of cold weather or snowfall. • A forecast was received daily from the Meteo Group, both for the next 24 hours and for the next 2-5 days. • There were also ten ice-monitoring sites in the County which provided real-time information. • Gritting was usually undertaken outside peak hours, as long as it was not urgent gritting (e.g. when rain was followed by a cold front). • Gritting of the 1375km of roads mentioned above was covered by 25 vehicles. The Chesham Local Area was serviced by both the Amersham Depot and the Aylesbury Depot.

- Treatment took 2-2.5 hours per route, based on normal ice conditions.
- There had been changes to the regulations covering drivers' hours, and two drivers were now required for each vehicle (50 drivers were employed across the County).
- There had been national problems with gritting in the previous Winter. The severe weather has caused massive demand and the Government had intervened regarding distribution.
- Buckinghamshire had re-stocked its grit supplies in January 2009. However there had been no guarantee that there would be another delivery of grit, so BCC had decided to reduce the gritting of roads in Priority 1 and carry out gritting of A and B roads to ensure that they remained open.
- National recommendations recommended increasing the amount of grit in storage, and countywide salt stock had been increased by approximately 1,500 tonnes. The total county stock level was now in excess of 10,000 tonnes.
- 'Safecoat' grit had been used in recent years, which was coated in molasses. This type of grit was more effective as it did not migrate from where it was laid, thereby reducing the amount required.
- However under the new contract with Ringway Jacobs, a decision had been taken to change to 'Pre-wet' grit, which mixed salt and water at the point of delivery, and again would not migrate.

Members then asked questions, which are summarised below.

What part can Local Area Forums play to influence the gritting programme?

Feed any relevant information to BCC so that this information can be used when planning for next year and years following.

Do you still provide salt bins?

Bins are no longer provided free of charge. If a bin is requested, a charge is made and the location for the bin is vetted. Once the initial fee has been paid, BCC will continue to refill the bin without charge. There are c. 700 bins in the County, and also heaps of grit in more rural areas. A list of bins in the Chesham Local Area can be provided.

How many accidents occurred on the roads last Winter?

We are still awaiting the data from last year, but in the previous year there were 56 collisions. The majority of these were on roads which had been gritted, which indicates that gritting is not all-effective.

The data on collisions is from the Police. Ice is listed as a contributory factor, but might not be the main factor.

Have you had claims made against BCC for collisions?

Individuals can make claims. However we have a Winter Maintenance Plan in place which we would see as a defence against a claim. The irony is that if BCC did not grit any roads, it would not be open to any claims.

Can you assure us that there will be no reduction in the number of routes being gritted this Winter. Also, there was a rumour last year that BCC sold grit to other authorities.

The routes to be gritted have not changed fundamentally – there is one additional road to be gritted in the Chiltern District.

Another Local Authority did approach us last year about buying our grit, but we refused.

In February 2009 you consulted on gritting at Chiltern Local Committee. However that was not followed up.

We acknowledge that we could be better at consulting with Parish Councils. AS it stands, if additional roads are added to the gritting schedule, gritting of other roads would have to be reduced.

The nearest frost monitoring station to Cholesbury is at Shardeloes. This cannot be accurate as it is much lower than Cholesbury. Chesham is recognized nationally as a frost pocket.

There are two frost stations at Stokenchurch. Stokenchurch has a similar altitude to this area.

How do you define a large village?

200 dwellings or more.

We were told that you do not supply piles of grit anymore.

We stopped providing grit piles, as animals were eating the molasses and causing accidents. Now we are using the new 'Pre-wet' grit, we will reconsider this method of provision. Grit piles are not ideal as they can leach into the water table.

If a route is used by school buses this route scores points on the gritting matrix. However BCC have chosen to use smaller vehicles (12-14 seats) for school transport in rural areas. These do not score on the matrix. Also if roads are not gritted, these smaller vehicles cannot operate. Can you look into this.

This will be considered as part of discussions at the April 2010 LAF meeting. The implications for the whole County need to be considered.

The map sent to Parish Councils of roads to be gritted is inaccurate in the Cokes Lane/Nightingales area.

This will be amended and re-sent to all Members of the Forum.

Will a printed leaflet be produced about gritting?

Yes, and it is being distributed to Parish Councils.

Do you work in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council to grit roads on the border?

There is some joint work on cross-border roads, specifically the A41 (Aston Clinton bypass).

Why did some grit disappear from bins last year?

There was some theft of grit from bins, which was then sold on illegally.

ACTIONS

- Chris Schwier to send list of salt bins in the Chesham Local Area
- Timely feedback to be taken from members in future re: their views on gritting - April/May 2010
- Re-consider whether salt piles might be re-instated - Eric Meek
- Issue of size of school buses and roads to be gritted to be looked at again (criteria to be reviewed?) and reported in April 2010 - Tim Fowler
- Amended map of gritting routes to be sent out to all members, including BCC members (showing Cokes Lane/Nightingales Lane) - Chris Schwier

4 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3 BRIEFING NOTE

Louise Whitney, Policy Officer, took Members through a presentation on the Local Transport Plan 3.

Louise Whitney made the following points:

- The Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) would have a long-term, broad vision. It would not include individual schemes.
- LTP3 would be a 15 year Strategy (2011-2026) with a rolling 3-year Implementation Plan.
- LTP3 would not be reward-funded in the same way that LTP2 had been. However it could attract regional grants.
- Nine Local Transport Areas had been identified which were based on Local Community

Area boundaries.

- Consultation was being carried out on three areas – LTP3 Objectives, Local Issues/Problems and Options to address problems.
- An LTP3 pack would be sent to all Parish Councils by e-mail or by hard copy if requested.
- Feedback could also be supplied via the BCC Website ('Have your Say' pages).
- Information which had previously been gathered from Parish Councils would be included in the Consultation. However if things had changed, this should be fed back.
- A full public Consultation would take place in Summer 2010.
- An LTP3 Workshop would be held on 19 November 2009 at Chiltern District Council, following the LSP meeting. All Members were invited to attend this.

A Member said that he was aware of proposals for speed corridors in Chesham, regarding lights at every junction, which would be inappropriate. The Member was pleased that no action had been taken on this.

Chris Schwier said that the Chesham and Amersham Transport Strategy included priorities which would remain and which would be reviewed if funding was available. Air quality was an important issue, and traffic needed to be kept moving.

A Member asked if LTP3 would include rail and bus travel. Louise Whitney said that it included all forms of transport.

A Member of Ashley Green Parish Council said that Ashley Green had only two bus routes running through it, and that one of these had been cut with only 3.5 weeks' notice. The Member said that if delivery of a service ceased in this way, the requirements identified in the Local Transport Plan would become insignificant. Louise Whitney said that they were acutely aware that the Plan had to be realistic and deliverable. This would be ensured through the Implementation Plans.

A Member asked about the bus service through Whelpley Hill which had been cut. The current status would be checked.

Members also made the following comments:

- Air quality was a top priority - residents in New Town were suffering from poor air quality.
- The off-peak bus from Chesham to Watford had stopped running, which many young people had relied on to get to Watford College.
- Chenies Village had also lost its only 'through' bus.
- Transport to Stoke Mandeville Hospital was an issue.
- Rural transport was a huge issue as 70% of Buckinghamshire was rural.

Louise Whitney said that there was an ongoing rural bus review. All the comments made by Members should be fed into LTP3. A Bus Strategy would run alongside LTP3. Provision would always depend on budgets and commercial viability.

ACTIONS:

- Whelpley Hill bus - check whether the Service was actually stopped and whether it has now re-started – Chris Schwier

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HIGHWAYS ISSUES

The Forum received the Report on Highways Issues.

Eric Meek (Area Manager South, Transport for Buckinghamshire) told Members the following:

- Patching of roads was now very successful, and much bigger areas of road were being patched, rather than just filling in pot-holes. Up to 40% more patching had been obtained

for the same cost.

- The Service was having to look at new ways of working to meet budgets.
- The new contract with Ringway Jacobs had brought in new ideas and technology.
- Brand new machines had been purchased for emptying gullies, which would record the location and condition of each gully, recorded on GI systems. Changes in condition could then be identified.
- There were over 70 000 gullies in Buckinghamshire, all of which could now be recorded.
- The Service was moving away from area budgets, to countywide budgets, with contractors being given countywide jobs, and therefore providing better rates.
- Total road enhancement programmes were being adopted, e.g. not just emptying the gullies, but also killing weeds, cleaning signs etc. This meant that traffic management systems only had to be used once for each road. This had been done recently in St Mary's Road, working in partnership with the Town Council. Close work was also ongoing with District Councils.
- In the current financial year every gully in the County would be cleared.

A Member asked what quality control was used for contractors, and said that the method for filling pot-holes sometimes seemed random. Eric Meek said that now that the client and contractor were all part of the same team, there was a lot to learn. About 50% of small jobs were checked. The aim was for 100% of work to be checked.

Long-term, a camera-operated system would be used, which would ensure quality control.

A Member said that their Parish Council had asked Transport for Buckinghamshire for a schedule of work, and had been promised this by July 2009. However it had not yet arrived. Chris Schwier said that it was taking longer than expected but should be available from April 2010. The Member asked if it would be possible to get a short-term list of work in the meantime. Eric Meek said that he would speak to the Member afterwards.

A Member said that they had eventually had speed limits put into their Parish. However the signage was taking longer. Eric Meek said that there was now a dedicated sign gang but that more traditional signs could take longer.

A Member said that there had not been a village sign for Asheridge at the North side for five years. Eric Meek said that he would follow this up.

A Member asked if there would be sub-contractors. Eric Meek said that Transport for Buckinghamshire would self-deliver as much as possible.

A Member asked about the materials used on roads. Eric Meek said that the same material was being used, but in thicker layers.

A Member of Latimer Parish Council said that they had been told that they would receive a Gang Report, but that it had not arrived. Chris Schwier said that the system had taken a long time to put in place, but was now set up. The Report should go to the Parish Clerk a week after the work was carried out.

Members also identified the following specific issues:

- Missing Belisha beacon in St Mary's Way
- Standing water outside Waitrose
- Blocked gullies by Latimer Bridge

Eric Meek said that these would be looked into, as well as the issue of signage in Cholesbury and Asheridge.

Schedule of work to be sent to Parishes - prob April 2010 - EM

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

2 December 2009, 7:30pm, at Bellingdon and Asheridge Village Hall (Transportation drop-in session from 7pm)

AOB

Kerry Stevens (Head of Service Provision, Adult Social Care and Lead Officer for the Chesham Local Area) asked members for their views on the voting structure for the Forum.

Members said the following:

- Some Members did not envisage a vote ever taking place.
- Collective issues should be addressed by the Forum, rather than parochial issues.
- Each Parish/Town Council should supply only one representative, who would therefore have more 'air time' at the meeting.
- A formula idea for voting was not the right way to address the issue.
- Party politics should not be brought into the Forum. Parish Councils were apolitical.
- Chesham Town Council should not have 5 votes (3 votes etc. could be debated, but should be avoided).
- Parish Councils felt that the 'goalposts had been moved,' which had created suspicion.

Kerry Stevens thanked Members for their views.