

ACTION NOTES

MEETING:	Chesham and Chiltern Villages Local Area Forum
DATE:	2 December 2009 7.33 pm to 9.15 pm
LOCATION	Bellingdon and Asheridge Village Hall

Present:	John Axon (Ashley Green Parish Council), Jane Bramwell (Chiltern District Council), Chris Brown (Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Council), Noel Brown (Buckinghamshire County Council) (Chairman), John Ford (The Lee Parish Council), Peter Jones (Chiltern District Council), Joan Lherbier (Chartridge Parish Council), David Natali (Ashley Green Parish Council) and Keith Platt (Latimer Parish Council)
In Attendance:	Carole Burslem, Rebecca Carley, Chris Schwier, Kerry Stevens, Helen Wailing and Mike Walker
Apologies:	Alan Bacon, Elaine Bamford, Mohammad Bhatti, Patricia Birchley, Michael Brand, Justine Fulford, Merrin Molesworth and Nick Rose

Item	ISSUES RAISED
1	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>See above.</p>
2	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Jane Bramwell declared an interest in Item 11 as she was a Member of the Board of Buckinghamshire Hospitals Trust.</p>
3	<p>ACTION NOTES</p> <p>The notes of the meetings held on 16 September 2009 and on 13 October 2009 were both agreed and signed as a correct record.</p>
4	<p>QUESTION TIME</p> <p>A question had been submitted by e-mail by Chris Brown (Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Council) regarding Country Parks and Green Spaces:</p> <p><i>Please could we have a statement from Bucks CC concerning their announcement in the Press this week (25 November) that they are considering the sale or outsourcing of the management of Green Spaces and Country Parks current owned by the Council.</i></p> <p><i>There appears to be confusion, following comments from at least one Cabinet Member in the Press, as to whether these sites would be sold or only their management transferred to other public or not for profit organisations / partnerships. Please could the County Council make the situation clear?</i></p>

	<p><i>It is understood that Parish Councils that have one or more of these Country Parks or Green Spaces in their area have been written to seeking their interest in taking over the management or the sites on the grounds that the current financial situation the Country Council finds itself in has driven this policy decision. What would be the nature of any financial support if any would also be attached to such a transfer?</i></p> <p><i>Please could we have clarification as to what the policy and proposals are, including what types of organisation apart from Parish Councils have been approached to date, and an explanation as to how such arrangements will be financed where a transfer occurs?</i></p> <p><i>Given that this policy is justified on financial grounds and to reduce the burden on the Council Tax payer how does Bucks County Council envisage that real savings will be realised if the transfer of responsibility was from BucksCC to say either a Parish Council or other Public Sector or 'Not For Profit' organisation requiring public funds to look after the Park of Open Space?</i></p> <p><i>How will locations which happen to be also SSSIs or comprise Scheduled Ancient Monuments etc be treated?</i></p> <p>Kerry Stevens, Lead Officer, said that the Head of Service would be asked to supply a written response to the question, which would be brought to the next meeting – Action: KS</p> <p>A Member said that meetings of the Local Area Forum should be advertised more, to encourage members of the public to attend. Carole Burslem, Locality Services Co-ordinator, said that this would be looked into – Action: CB</p>
5	<p>PETITIONS</p> <p>There were no petitions.</p>
6	<p>POSSIBLE CHANGE OF NAME FOR CHESHAM LOCAL AREA FORUM</p> <p>The Local Area Forum received the Report of Alison Derrick, Locality Services Co-ordinator.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>To change the name of the Forum to the Chesham and Chiltern Villages Local Area Forum</p>
7	<p>DISCUSSION OF RIGHTS OF WAY CURRENT INITIATIVES</p> <p>Mike Walker (Group Manager, Rights of Way and Access) spoke to members about current Rights of Way initiatives.</p> <p>'Walk your Local Paths' Initiative</p> <p>A letter had been sent to Parish Councils, encouraging residents to walk the local path network and to let Mike Walker's team know if there were any problems with paths.</p>

Byways open to all traffic

A public inquiry had been held in the previous year regarding applications to upgrade routes to byways open to all traffic. The law had now changed, and applications of the same kind could no longer be made.

A Member congratulated Mike Walker on the outcome of the Public Inquiry looking into three Byway applications at Chesham.

Village Green applications

This was a growing issue, and many applications were being made as a way of preventing development. An application had been made in Bellingdon and a public inquiry would be held in February 2010. Each public inquiry could cost between £10 000 and £20 000.

A Member said that the application in Bellingdon was delaying an application by the Parish Council for affordable homes.

'Simply Walk' Initiative

This had been running for six years and was growing very large. Some funding (£25 000) for Simply Walk came from the District Councils, Adult Social Care, and the PCT. However the Programme costed £40 000 annually, and was therefore currently running at a loss. Volunteer Leaders were trained for the walks, and five walks were held in Chesham. There were c. 1200 volunteer leaders, and the response had been very good. However resources were necessary to keep the walks running.

The walks were run in conjunction with Social Care as they helped to achieve the mental health targets. The benefits of walking were social as well as physical health. The Programme was currently celebrating its third wedding of people who had met on the walks!

Rights of Way Strategy

This was linked to the Local Transport Plan. Work on accessibility had been successful, and kissing gates were now being fitted on routes instead of stiles. The 'Donate a Gate' Programme run by the Chiltern Society was also going well and was up to its 200th donor. BCC had promised to match every gate donated. The donor of the gate could have their name put on the gate and choose its location.

In addition to the above, the Rights of Way Team also produced Parish newsletters.

A Member said that they were concerned that the wider gates which had been put in place for wheelchair users had meant that if the gates were left open, livestock could escape more easily. It had also made theft of livestock and horses easier.

Mike Walker said that they wanted to work with farmers on this issue. The gate described sounded like a gate for mobility scooters, and the gate should be operated by radar from the scooter. Mike Walker said that he would look into this.

A Member asked which other local groups had been contacted about 'Walk your Local Paths.' Mike Walker said that the Parish Councils had been the first organisations contacted, but that this could be spread further. The Member suggested the Ramblers Association.

A Member asked whether the policy was to replace all stiles with metal kissing gates. Mike Walker said that timber gates caused many more problems in installation and maintenance.

A Member asked about the remit regarding registered land. Mike Walker said that there would be a new Commons Registration Act in 2010 which would in theory make it easier to register land. There was no intention to review all registered land in the County, as had been done in the early 1960s.

A Member referred to Bridleway 51, and said that there was an issue with the maintenance of the surface and who was responsible for this. Mike Walker said he would look into this, and said that he was aware of the problem of flooding and water erosion on the Bridleway and the concerns of a neighbouring householder.

A Member asked who was responsible for clearing hedges from Rights of way. Mike Walker said that anything that grew naturally (i.e. weeds and nettles) was the responsibility of the County Council as highway authority. If adjoining hedgerows overgrew a path, this was the responsibility of the landowner/ owner of the hedge. BCC did have a regular path clearance programme. Much of this work was now done proactively on routes susceptible to undergrowth, before the routes became very overgrown. The Chiltern Society helped with clearance, with 50-60 of their members meeting to carry out works on rights of way. BCC provided resources for this, and ensured health and safety checks and risk management were carried out.

Kerry Stevens asked whether people on the Simply Walk programme could help with maintenance of the routes. Mike Walker said that the people on the walks were often elderly or less agile, so this would not be possible, especially given the level of health and safety obligations that apply.

8 DELEGATED BUDGET DECISIONS - POSITIVE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 2009/10

The Local Area Forum received the report of Maureen Bruce (Senior Practitioner).

Carole Burslem said that the Report came to the Local Area Forum for the Forum to decide whether to support the recommended schemes. The funding had to be spent in the current financial year (by 31 March 2010)

A member referred to the bid by Nexus/Chiltern District Council and asked where the activities would take place. Carole Burslem said that Nexus worked through schools and through neighbourhood action groups (NAGs).

A member asked about the origin of the PAYP funding. Rebecca Carley (Locality Services Manager) said that the funding came to BCC as a grant from central Government, with criteria attached to it. Repeat funding for the next financial year was anticipated.

RESOLVED

The Chesham (Chesham and Chiltern Villages) Local Area Forum approved the eligible applications received for the PAYP budget within its area.

A member said that it would be helpful if the PAYP funding process for 2010/11 was started earlier in the year, and if members were given an overview of bids which could be made.

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DELEGATED BUDGET DECISIONS - LOCAL PRIORITIES BUDGET

The Local Area Forum received the report of Alison Derrick (Locality Services Co-ordinator).

Carole Burslem said that the Report came to the Local Area Forum for the Forum to decide whether to support the recommended schemes. The funding had to be spent in the current financial year (by 31 March 2010). Each Local Area had £8000 to spend on Local Priorities. In areas where Local Plans were already in place, the funding had been spent on priorities identified in the Plans. However the Local Plan for the Chesham Local Area was not yet in place. The Local Plan would be in place for the funding round in the next year.

A member noted that there was £1975 that had not yet been bid for, and asked if bids could still be submitted for this. Rebecca Carley (Locality Services Manager) said that Alison Derrick was working on some additional proposals, including a playground for the Bellingdon and Asheridge Village Hall. However other bids would be welcomed.

A member asked if the funding could be used for playground equipment, and said that Chesham Town Council had proposed schemes for this. Rebecca Carley said that Alison Derrick would look into this.

The Chairman said that any bids for the remaining funding would be looked at by officers and the Chairman, as timing would not allow for the bids to come to the full Local Area Forum.

A member asked what the criteria were for the Local Priorities funding. Rebecca Carley said that the bids had to fit legally with the strategic objectives of BCC. Schemes were evaluated on the basis of value for money. Other sources of funding were also investigated. The Locality Services Co-ordinator would obtain professional advice where necessary on this.

A member asked if the funding requested by the Good Neighbour Scheme would be spent in the Chesham Local Area.

Kerry Stevens (Lead Officer) said that it would be used for a specific focus on the Chesham area, and would be spent on measures to prevent social isolation. The funding would be 'pump priming' for Age Concern to develop the scheme and to make contacts in the local community.

Members agreed that the funding should only be given for the Good Neighbour Scheme if it was specifically going to be spent in the Chesham Local Area.

RESOLVED

The Chesham (Chesham and Chiltern Villages) Local Area Forum agreed funding for the eligible and recommended schemes within its area.

Agreement for funding for the Good Neighbour Scheme was subject to the funding being used within and across the Chesham Local Area.

Any bids for the remaining funding to be considered and agreed by the Chairman

	<p>and BCC Officers.</p>
10	<p>DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL AREA PLANS</p> <p>Carole Burslem told members that a Local Planning event was being organised. Each Parish Council would be sent a template with five headings. Responses to the template would be collated and a workshop held to set local priorities. These priorities would set future agendas and budgets.</p> <p>Priorities already identified (e.g. in Parish Plans) would be taken into account.</p> <p>The Chairman urged all members to attend the Planning Workshop.</p>
11	<p>VERBAL UPDATE ON AMERSHAM HOSPITAL (IF AVAILABLE)</p> <p>The Chairman gave a verbal update on planned changes to Amersham Hospital, and said the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately half of the clinics would close, some as soon as December 2009. The closure would affect 40% of patients who attended the hospital clinics. • The changes were part of making services more local. Chesham Healthzone was still awaited, and there was local pressure for the clinics to be held less often, but at Amersham. This would require 18 specialists moving to the hospital, rather than over 50,000 additional journeys of patients to Wycombe and Aylesbury. • A press release about the changes was planned by the Hospitals Trust. <i>[Post-meeting note – here is the link to the press release:</i> http://www.buckinghamshirehospitals.nhs.uk/change-to-clinics-at-buckinghamshire-hospitals.htm] <p>Members expressed concern about the changes and the potential affect on local residents, especially elderly residents who lived in rural areas.</p>
12	<p>FORMAL MEMBERSHIP AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS</p> <p>The Local Area Forum received the Report of Alison Derrick, Locality Services Co-ordinator.</p> <p>Members discussed the suggestions in the Report, and the following main points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish Councils would prefer equality of votes (i.e. the Town Council to have the same number of votes as a Parish Council). • Chesham Town Council had previously asked for five votes, but had now reduced this to three votes. • The Parish Councils were apolitical and would not be happy if party politics was brought into the Local Area Forum. <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The following three voting options to be taken back to Parish/Town Councils for comment and brought back to next LAF meeting:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amersham Model • Revised Amersham Model (Chesham TC to have 3 votes) • Revised Amersham Model (BCC to have more than 1 vote)
13	<p>BRIEFING NOTE RE: SWINE FLU PREPARATIONS</p> <p>Members noted the briefing note regarding swine flu preparations.</p>
14	<p>FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS</p>
15	<p>DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS</p> <p>3 March 2010, 7:30pm, Chartridge Village Hall 17 March 2010, 3:30pm, Local Planning Meeting, Chesham Town Council 23 June 2010, 7:30pm 29 September 2010, 7:30pm</p>