



# Minutes

## *ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND LOCALITY SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE*

**MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND LOCALITY SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2013, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 9.30 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.30 PM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr W Bendyshe-Brown, Mr T Butcher, Mr P Gomm, Mr S Lambert and Mr W Whyte (Chairman)

### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr A Clarke, Ms S Griffin (Secretary), Dr J Nethercoat, Mr P O'Hare, Mr S Rooney, Ms R Vigor-Hedderly and Ms K Wager

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Bill Chapple, David Carroll and Dev Dhillon.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on the Wednesday 26 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

### **4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions.

### **5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



The Chairman explained that the Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee has a varied and wide workload.

One of the challenges during the year will be to schedule the agendas as the items arise as well as address some of the big issues/topics already on the agenda for the Committee.

A number of working groups have taken place to look into issues such as grass cutting and weed spraying. A meeting with TfB took place on 12 September examining in detail the TfB contract, its structure, management and key elements. Further meetings of the Working Group have been arranged for October and November to discuss KPI's, Task Orders and Local Area Technician prioritisation of work.

The Working Group discussed and agreed the proposed questions for the Member Satisfaction Survey which will be sent out to all Members in October.

## **6 WRITTEN RESPONSES REQUESTED FROM COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE 24 JULY 2013**

### **a) ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE - GREEN DEAL**

Members were referred to the information paper on The Green Deal – The National Perspective, which gives further details on Bucks County Council's involvement with the Green Deal and the creation of a Green Deal Together Community Interest Company.

During discussion, the following questions were asked and points made;

**The Green Deal is a Government initiative to encourage energy-saving improvements to be made to homes and businesses without the costs having to be paid up front. From a customer point of view, they have to pay for everything which could also include the initial assessment. This is a regressive situation and there is great difficulty getting people to take up a 'free service' which they now have to pay for.** The Chairman explained that the Green Deal and Community Interest Company were discussed during the Cabinet meeting in March. Further discussions by the Environment, Transport and Localities Working Group are needed to flesh about the mechanism for the initiative.

**Concern was expressed about the Cabinet Member response of not being in favour of a long term project between the Government and the Local Authority. There is the need to ensure that the right amount of scrutiny is in place. The issues of winter fuel payments and extra funding for the over 75's should also be looked as this affects Adult Social Care.** The Green Deal is a national policy. In terms of the efficacy of the scheme, residents have their own differing views. As long as the scheme exists there is the opportunity to provide services for the local community.

Members were asked to consider how the Green Deal can be fed into the Committee Work programme.

The Chairman requested details of how current resources are expended and an update on the status of Community Interest Company.

**Action: Kama/Alex Day**

**b) ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE - SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL SCHEME**

Members were referred to the information paper on Sustainable Travel Capital Schemes (externally funded cycling and walking schemes)

The information paper advises there is no Bucks County Council Capital Budget allocated to cycling and walking schemes, therefore the Sustainability Team is actively looking to secure funding from external sources, i.e.

- Developer Contributions (Section 106),
- Grants (i.e. from the Department for Transport)

During discussion, the following questions were asked and points made;

**Concern was expressed that taking into account the health responsibilities of the Local Authority within the community, there is no capital budget for the cycling and walking scheme. Is there a plan to identify schemes for cycle routes/walks across different areas of the county and is it possible to apply for funding?** The Local Sustainable Transport Fund is the single largest source of funding for the cycle infrastructure in Bucks. The Local Authority MTL process for funding is very competitive. Nationally over the last 3-4 years the kind of funding available has been reduced. There are ambitions for cycling routes but unfortunately the funds have been prioritised elsewhere i.e. the maintenance of carriageways. As part of the development of a new dairy on the outskirts of Aylesbury, Arla is committing £367,630 to the canal towpath as part of the Section 106 agreement which will be used to widen the towpath, improve the surface and provide a cycle path.

**Is it possible to make use of EU Structural funds i.e. reducing the carbon footprint? It is a surprise that no bids have been submitted for the scheme. Are potential investments streams being missed?** A joint visit to the EU Team took place with Bucks Business First. In a comparison of the affluence of counties in the UK, Buckinghamshire was in the lower quarter decile which resulted in exclusion from the funding stream. Clarification can be obtained if BCC have made a recent bid for EU Structural funds.

**Action: John Lamb/Nigel Simms**

**The existing walkways/pathways are badly maintained. There does not appear to be any funding for repairs as the available funds are being used to repair carriageways. The County Council needs to look for further funding opportunities.** The comments about the pathways have been noted. An extra £250,000

has been invested in the carriageway repairs this year. It is hoped that this will continue through the competitive MTP process. Discussions are taking place with the Cabinet Member to address investment in the footway network.

**Is there a dedicated officer responsible for sourcing funding from EU grants?**

There is not a dedicated person to source EU funding. Work is taking place with Bucks Business First to seek a resource. BCC need to have a presence in the Brussels office but there is no capacity to allow this. Avenues and opportunities are being looked into. An update on progression can be given.

**Action: John Lamb**

**At a recent seminar by Bucks Business First, delegates were advised that there is an EU allocation to spend and bids were needed. The missed opportunity is disappointing.** An update on bids made by BCC can be provided.

**Action: John Lamb**

**c) CABINET RESPONSE - TFB (RINGWAY JACOBS CONTRACT)**

The Chairman explained that an enquiry took place into the TfB/Ringway Jacobs contract in February 2012. Following the enquiry, 9 recommendations were made which were briefing discussed at the last meeting of the Environment Select Committee.

Most of the recommendations are part of the current enquiry and any pertinent issues can be carried forward by the ETL Select Committee.

During discussion, the following points were made and questions asked,

**It is pleasing to see that Cabinet approved all of the points put forward.**

*Recommendation 1 – The Cabinet Member and Strategic Client should seek a ‘contract development opportunity’ etc.*

**The update for the Committee advises independent external yearly audits. This was not raised during a discussion on the 2012/3 audits at the last meeting of the Regulatory and Audit Committee.**

*Recommendation 2 – Membership of the Strategic Board*

**Who is the elected Member on the Strategic Board?** Janet Blake, Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation is the elected Member on the Strategic Board.

**A recommendation was made to widen the Membership of the Strategic Board to include the two Cabinet Spokesmen. Why has this not been done?** The membership of the Strategic Board does not include the two Cabinet Spokesmen as the role of the Cabinet Spokesmen is now defunct.

**The Terms of Reference of the Board should have been amended to reflect this. Why was the recommendation agreed if the role of the Cabinet Spokesmen no**

**longer exists?** The Cabinet Member can arrange for a deputy to attend a meeting of the Strategic Board if he/she is unable to attend. Janet Blake is to be contacted for clarification.

**Action: Kama Wager**

*Recommendation 3 – Papers of the TfB Strategic Board should be made accessible to County Councillors*

**There needs to be clear signposting to the Strategic Board papers.**

**When was the last meeting of the Strategic Board?** The last meeting of the Strategic Board was two weeks ago. The minutes of the meeting are to be circulated to Committee Members.

**Action: John Lamb**

*Recommendation 5 – TfB should introduce a Key Performance Indicator*

**It has been reported that there has been some difficulty with the ‘report a problem’ facility and the advised go live date (August) has been delayed. Is there a revised go live date for the facility?** Work is on-going to resolve the issues. It is hoped that the facility will go live on the 1 October 2013.

**Who is on the membership of the Improvement Project Group and are Members of the County Council able to attend by invitation?** The Improvement Project group is a small group of people from across Place Service to look at feedback and comments from members of the public. From a client perspective the membership of the Project Group includes senior management. The Group report back to the Customer Board which is chaired by Margaret Aston. Members of the County Council are aware of the work-streams and can interact with the Project Group. One of the objectives is to establish more formal governance for the Project Group.

*Recommendation 8 – the ‘While Here’ policy*

**Concern was expressed that there does not appear to have been any real progress on the ‘While Here’ policy.** Unfortunately funding has not been made available to adopt this practice. There is the parallel process of member ambition of the services they would like to be addressed and the reality of the funding available.

**The report needs to be amended if the recommendation has not been agreed.**

**Part of the KPI is for Ringway Jacobs is to repair category 1 potholes. Public perception is that the County Council is not doing a good job when gangs spend 30 minutes repairing one of several potholes in a specific area and leave the rest. It is fundamental that a better way of programming repairs is found.** The Council removed the category 2 approach to repairing potholes in 2011. This is being addressed via the MTP process. A review of the categorisation of potholes is also taking place.

The Chairman advised that the issue of potholes and their categorisation can also be

addressed by the Working Group.

**Action: All**

*Recommendation 9 – Local Area Technicians (LAT) to be supported to interface*

**What is the timescale for the conclusion of the LAT review?** A workshop took place a few weeks ago during which TfB were given clear objectives by the County Council. TfB has been tasked with providing a clear proposal of how concerns can be managed within the next four weeks. Part of the process is to engage in discussions with Lead Officers and Members of the County Council.

LAT efficiency comes back to empowerment.

The Chairman said that it has been 18 months since the recommendations were published and unfortunately most are still outstanding. Members of the Select Committee have acknowledged that whilst some work is in progress other recommendations have yet to be completed.

Outstanding issues from the meeting today will be taken forward into the current inquiry being carried out by the Committee.

**Action: All**

## **7 PUBLIC TRANSPORT: FUTURE RISKS AND CHALLENGES**

Andrew Clarke, Passenger Transport Manager, BCC and Mr Paul O'Hare Community Impact Bucks were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr Clarke took Members through the document on bus patronage and subsidies, highlighting the following key points.

### *Background*

The spend on subsidised bus services has been reduced by 30% over the last five years, whilst industry costs such as fuel and insurance are rising. Much of this has been achieved via tendering efficiencies, increasing commercial revenues through short term investment to grow commercial routes and targeted marketing and promotional work. Extensive reviews have taken place of all supported services. One of the key points is that bus services are a deregulated industry and operate on a 'for profit' basis. 40% of the services are entirely commercial; 40% receive an element of support from the Local Authority; 20% are directly contracted to Transport for Buckinghamshire. The Local Authority has influence but not direct control over bus operators. Bus operators can make a commercial decision such as a change to a bus route. The Local Authority can seek to influence the change but cannot prevent the change.

### *Core services*

In rural areas a large number of passengers have a free bus pass. Buckinghamshire has an aging population and the usage of a free bus pass is rising.

Concessionary fares are a statutory responsibility which is devolved to the Local Authority. The Local Authority cannot control the cost of concessionary fares which has been destabilising. Bus operators will receive roughly 50% of the commercial bus fare for carrying the holder of a free bus pass. The Department for Transport has also reduced the Bus Service Operators Grant by 20%.

The focus of the review has been on urban services during which concerns have been raised about a reduction in urban mileage. One of the key points is to try and improve services particularly in urban areas. Options such as community transport is being looked into which could fit in around mainstream services but would ultimately rely on volunteers.

Mr O'Hare explained that part of his role is to manage the community transport hub and to provide support to set up community transport schemes.

The 14 October is 'Give a Lift to Work' week to encourage people to take up community care/transport schemes as an alternative method of transport.

During the update, the following points were made and questions asked;

**It is understood that funds are diminishing but there is concern from Members and residents that there was not a public consultation about the proposed reduction/withdrawal of bus services.** It is not a statutory requirement for a consultation to be held for commercially operated services. However it is a VOSA requirement for a minimum of 56 days' notice to be given for changes to bus routes. If the County Council make changes to a bus route there is a consultation process. Bus operators do not have a statutory duty to attend a consultation, although they would be encouraged to do so.

**With regard to the financial mechanics of commercial services and bus passes, how is the scheme currently funded and is it subsidised by County Council i.e. the bus operator receives 50% commercial fare. On rural transport 90% of the travellers could be using a bus pass. The logical conclusion is that if 100% of the passengers use a bus pass then the service becomes uneconomical and would disappear. This is an issue in rural areas.** The Department for Transport (DfT) sets the guidance rates of 50/55 pence in the pound. The majority of the bus services in rural areas are not commercial. The operator receives an element of subsidy from the County Council subsidy budget and concessionary fare reimbursement. Concessionary fares re-imburement is based on average fares and journey lengths. This means that routes with a high proportion of concessionary pass holders will need a greater level of subsidy to remain viable.

**What is the present cost to County Council to subsidise buses?** The cost of subsidised services is £2.7 million. The cost of the concessionary fare scheme is £4 million.

**Page 29 of the report refers to the Transport for Buckinghamshire contract containing a commitment to provide a 3% reduction in the budget each year. Is this different to the 3% TfB efficiency in the contract?** The reduction of 3% in the budget and 3% TfB efficiency are one and the same.

**A member said there are severe financial pressures around the viability of the bus services. Community Transport does not receive a subsidy from the County Council. They receive an Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) of 45 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25 pence per mile thereafter. MP's for Buckinghamshire have advised that Bucks receives a lower subsidy per journey that most other counties. There has also been a reduction in fuel subsidy from the Government. It was noted that there is a national scheme and national guidelines around bus services. There is a high frequency of commercially operated services i.e. the 280 bus service which is different from Community Transport. There is some additional grant funding for Community Transport available from the DFT although the funding is difficult to get.**

**With regard to the Travel Bucks Strategy, Policy 1 - Buckinghamshire County Council will work in partnership with strategic healthcare partners (e.g. NHS) to consider, at the earliest opportunity, the integration of Client Transport and Non-Emergency Patient Transport. What is the current status of the policy and are opportunities to integrate transport being looked into?** Currently the Community Hub signpost services to existing transport schemes in the county i.e. if an individual needs transport for a hospital appointment they can be given contact details for services such as the Community Car Scheme and Dial A Ride etc.

**As part of the Travel Bucks Strategy is the possible use of transport assets such as school buses during holiday periods being looked into?** The use of other transport assets within the county is starting to happen at operator level. Part of the wider strategy is the alignment of contracts. The Local Authority is in the process of forming a partnership with South Central Ambulance Service and Dial a Ride to be transport suppliers in the network. Similar discussions are taking place with the NHS.

**Why can't the power given to Commercial Services be given to community led services in the voluntary sector?** Bus services are deregulated. Bus operators are free to operate the routes/timetables they choose and communities can operate the services they wish. The Local Authority doesn't licence or control Commercial Services.

**Why are communities not allowed to manage their own bus services?** They are able to run services if they wish. The Local Authority is trying to broker more engagement with communities. If there is an issue with the set up and running of a Community Bus service, the Local Authority will provide help and support.

**There have been several complaints that the Buckinghamshire Community Transport Hub is only open between the hours of 10am/2pm. These hours would suit those who are retired but how would individuals such as school pupils access the Community Hub out of these hours?** The contact hours of the service are advertised as 10am-2pm. In reality telephone calls are answered between the hours of 9-4/4.30 as long as there is a member of staff in the office. It has been recognised that there may be the need for information outside the hours of the service. If an individual calls outside of the core hours they are able to leave a

message. Staff will telephone the caller to acknowledge receipt of their message and ask how the service can be of assistance.

**Has consideration been given to the Transport Hub being more reactive? Bus services are under threat and there needs to be a system in place to fill transport gaps i.e. last minute GP appointments.** A new web portal entitled 'Xchange Bucks' has recently been launched. The website gives details of resources and opportunities for the voluntary, community and charitable sector in Buckinghamshire. Bucks County Council have contributed towards the funding of the website which could provide the opportunity to advertise Community Transport schemes around the County.

<http://www.xchangebucks.org.uk/>

The Chairman asked for a written response to clarify the current status of the 9 policies within the Travel Bucks Strategy as quite critical issues are being dealt with which could help inform future enquires of the Working Group.

**Action: Andrew Clarke**

## 8 TFB COMMUNICATION

### a) CUSTOMER FOCUS PROJECT

Dr Joe Nethercoat, Senior Manager, Place explained that he has been seconded to the role of Senior Manager as a replacement for Karen Agbabiaka who has left the Council.

The meeting today provides the opportunity to give Members of the Committee an update on the issues being faced by the service area in response to customer complaints in terms of time and quality of the response.

The following issues around business intelligence have been identified;

- The recording of information is not as satisfactory as the Local Authority would like it to be
- Knowing where complaints are coming in and what they are about
- How to channel or lower the demand on services i.e. alternative service methods which could result in earlier reporting.

Work done so far includes 75% of correspondence is now dealt with within 5 days (this figure has recently fallen to 70%).

During discussion, the following questions were asked.

**Clarification was requested of the process for receiving problems/complaints for Tfb and County Council services.** The County Council mainly receive reports about defects which would go via the Contact Centre. The Contact Centre work closely with Tfb to address the reported defects. Formal complaints go via the County Council Corporate Complaints system.

**A Member said selective reporting and tracking is a concern. It should be possible to track all of the complaints received. It has also been noted that there has been a decline in the letter response time.** It was noted that there are two issues to be taken into account. The first is what the Local Authority considers to be a complaint i.e. a piece of correspondence from a member of the public. A formal complaint is easily tracked. One year ago the County Council was receiving 100 formal complaints per month. Following a change to the way formal complaints are dealt with currently 30 formal complaints are received per month. One of the issues is that there are approximately 4500 calls into services which are often to report a defect but could include a complaint about a response time. There are three themes being looked into; how to reduce avoidable contact and failure demand; how to understand customer's journey and improve customer service; how to address reputational issues in relation to correspondence and contact management.

Significant improvement in performance is being seen. Front facing staff have attended correspondence courses. There is a move in the right direction but there is still some way to go. There is always a bar of expectation.

**A report detailing statistics is to be sent to Committee Members.**

**Action: Joe Nethercoat**

**Concern was expressed that over the last three-four years there does not appear to have been any learning from complaints received to inform service delivery and the creation of Task Orders.** Place is the first service area to adopt the system which has been running for approximately a year. One of the lessons learnt was if the public had been more aware of issues with some of the contractors there may have been a different perception. There is drive towards higher levels of contract performance. It is now possible to track customer enquiries by division and identify areas where there are more issues and therefore target intelligence appropriately i.e. via the Local Area Technicians

**Would it be beneficial to have separate complaints teams for TfB and BCC as there could potentially be information overloads from different sources?** There is joint working between TfB and BCC staff i.e. the development of the webpage. One of the added benefits is for the two services to work together to be as transparent as they can be.

A report detailing a selection of data for the areas looked at and the trends is to be made available for the next meeting of the Committee.

**Action: Joe Nethercoat**

## **b) EFFICIENCY SAVINGS**

Sean Rooney, Senior Manager referred Committee Members to the document on page 45 of the agenda which is an extract from the significant process for efficiency savings.

The document gives details of service efficiencies not service reductions, a flavour of the efficiency and credence of the information system and assurance that efficiencies are being dealt with via robust system

During discussion, the following questions were asked.

**Concern was expressed that efficiency savings were being blamed for deterioration in services.** The efficiency process is fed to the client and via the Task Order process. Work is carried out to the available budget. If there is a challenge to the level of the budget applied there will be a service reduction.

**There is a KPI in the Ringway Jacobs contract of 3% efficiency savings to be achieved every year. Is this effectively leading to a 3% reduction in services?** There are discussion and negotiations taking place around how to achieve better efficiencies through the 4 year plan, not just achieving the 3% year on year. This should look at whether, over the course of the contract, there are more substantial savings that can be made.

**If the aim to achieve 3% efficiency every year would it not be more prudent to make the saving of 15% in the first year.** Achieving 15% efficiency in the first year does not necessarily incentivise the correct behaviour for the subsequent years. When Ringway Jacobs were first appointed there was clarity and transparency about the previous costs and the expectation of the delivery of 3% efficiencies year on year. Financial colleagues look for efficiencies as Ringway Jacobs can gain from this. There is a robust scrutiny/finance/audit process in place. A significant amount of senior management time was taken to look at the contract, the client and how services can be delivered differently. There is significant challenge to contract throughout the year which includes assurance that there are not just efficiency savings in the first year.

**A copy of the three year plan was requested at the last meeting of the ETL Working Group. Efficiencies to date have always been small – i.e. making use of a second hand shredder. This is a reduction in local overhead costs/budget so why it is classed as an efficiency? Local overheads are already being paid to reuse the equipment available.** Services have been tasked with delivering the efficiencies identified via the MTP process. Staff are encouraged to bring forward supplementary efficiencies. Efficiencies could be as small scale as using a recycled shredder but it starts to add up to significant cost savings.

**Should the efficiency not be captured at the beginning of the year and the Task Order reduced accordingly?** In retrospect the key message to client is the need for more collaborative working and foresight at the beginning of the year. This is the expectation going forward.

An updated report of efficiencies made over the last 12 months is to be circulated to Committee Members.

**Action: Sean Rooney**

**The Working Group discussed the benefits of benchmarking by bringing examples of best practice and efficiencies from Ringway Jacobs contracts from other counties into the Buckinghamshire contract. The Group were advised that there is an incentive scheme in place asking staff to give ideas for improvements and efficiencies.** There is an incentive scheme in place which is funded by Ringway Jacobs. There is a financial incentive of a small value voucher for a high street store for ideas which result in significant savings. The efficiencies shown on the TfB efficiency savings document are an extract of staff suggestions from the system. The suggestions are approved by contractor and the Senior Manager, TfB and are checked and challenged at a number of levels.

With regard to benchmarking, as part of the The Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), national sectors are working together on various ideas for improvements in delivering efficient and effective services. The HMEP have created a number of toolkits to assist Local Authorities, one of which is a benchmarking tool. A significant piece of work has been done to look at case studies, best practice and new ideas/techniques i.e. the use of jet patchers and infra-red repairs.

**Do you think trying to find 3% each year is a management distraction?** Efficiencies are a management requirement not a management distraction. Efficiencies are fed into the business management and Task Order process.

## **9 GRASS CUTTING UPDATE**

Ruth Vigor-Hedderly, Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation was welcomed to the meeting.

The Deputy Cabinet Member explained that one of the recommendations from the last meeting of the Working Group was for opportunities of working with local farmers who would be willing to cut areas that are adjoined /close to their land when they carry out their own cutting works would be looked into.

Members were informed that farmers have to be insured and fully trained to work on the highway. Consideration also has to be given to the availability of the farmer and where they would work. A meeting has taken place with the consultant to look at the possibility of the devolved responsibility for grass cutting and the opportunity to engage with farmers/District and Parish Councils.

In the Chalfont St Giles area there was an arrangement in place between the Local Authority and a number of locals to cut the verges. The decision was made not to continue with this arrangement and the responsibility came back to the County Council.

Between the 28 October/4 November, a team from TfB cut back the foliage in the area which included foliage around signs and barriers. Members need to engage with Local Area Technicians and advise them of any areas which are of concern.

There are two elements to the weed spraying programme;

- The duty to keep the highways free of debris
- When should weed spraying take place i.e. is weed spraying taking place at the right time of the year?

One of the questions raised is why are there still weeds at the side of the road when the highways are swept by a road sweeper. The County Council could then go and spray the roots.

One suggested saving from the MTP is a reduction in the number of rural grass cuts. The Local Authority has a legal obligation to keep the highways clear of weeds and foliage and to ensure that splay visibility is not impaired.

The District Council carry out 14 urban highway grass cuts per year compared to 10 a year carried out by BCC. There is a policy in place which states a minimum of 8 urban highway grass cuts a year. There is however, the public perception of the difference in the number of cuts carried out by the District Council and BCC. The possibility of working with Aylesbury Vale District Council to coordinate cuts or to outsource weed spraying and urban cutting to the District Council in a uniformed manner is being looked into.

During discussion, the following questions were asked.

**In some parts of the county it looks as if some areas of grass and weeds have been deliberately missed or ignored. A TfB officer advised that weed spraying takes place twice a year. Why do the County Council not use a known weedkiller such as Roundup which is a one off treatment for weeds?** One of the issues is to address when the cuts are made. Rain has promoted a phenomenal amount of weed growth in some areas of the county. Products for weed sprays are looked at to ensure they are strong enough and usage is legally allowed. The use of Altrazine and Simonzine was banned in 1992. The understanding is that the County Council are not permitted to use Roundup but clarification will be sought.

A written response of the statutory requirements of the products that can be used and the weed spraying programme is to be provided.

**Action: Sean Rooney**

**In terms of cutting hedges and grass on the highways, there is some confusion over what farmers are allowed/not allowed to do. Is it possible to have clarification?** Senior officers have advised that it is a statutory requirement for anyone who cuts the hedges and grass on the highways to be trained and insured. If there was an accident the County Council could be liable. A written response to the clarify legislation will be provided.

**Action: Ruth Vigor-Hedderly**

**It is good to hear that there is the potential to devolve services to parishes. The issue of street cleaning was raised at the last County Council meeting. The response given was that part of the tender process advised that certain brushes could not be used as they would damage the road surface.** A meeting has taken place with the two District

Councils to discuss the possibility of joined up working. The current contract price for BCC is £2.00 per hour which TfB/Ringway Jacobs worked hard to achieve. The District Council has suggested that they would like to take on the devolved services but this would be at an increased price. The District Councils are reluctant for BCC to take on the District Council grass cutting.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation was congratulated on the good work she has carried out under the restrictions and budgets.

The Leader of the Council has asked for a summary of the findings to be compiled for cabinet. A copy of the report will be sent to Members of the Committee.

**Action: Ruth Vigor-Hedderly**

Members of the Committee agreed that due to the work undertaken by the Deputy Cabinet Member, there did not appear to be a need for any formal recommendation. The Committee would like sight of the forthcoming reports to Cabinet to make comment on.

**Action: All**

## **10 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION: CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE**

### **a) ECONOMIC GROWTH AGENDA – ROLE OF BUCKS BUSINESS FIRST, BUCKS COUNTY COUNCIL AND LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS**

Members of the Committee were referred to the information paper giving the background on Economic Growth. This topic is on the Committee work plan for future discussion.

**With regard to the Chesham project, there is similar work taking place at the Aylesbury Healthy Living Centre. Would it be beneficial to compare and contrast the work taking place? Is this a one off benefit or could it be part of collaborative way within the county of delivering services?** The aim is to use the Chesham Community Wellbeing Project as a pilot. Feedback can be obtained from the officers involved.

**Action: Kama Wager**

The Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) will be discussed at a future meeting of the Committee. A formal update about the New Homes Bonus is expected from the Government at the end of the year.

### **b) SHALE GAS FRACTURING ‘FRACKING’, OUTLINING THE BUCKS COUNTY COUNCIL POSITION**

Members noted the briefing note on Fracking and Shale Gas.

An information paper about fracking has been published on the BCC website and fracking is on the Committee work plan. There needs to be an understanding of County Council policies around this issue.

**Why has the report to the Committee been signed off by Janet Blake, Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation not Lesley Clarke, Cabinet Member for Environment?** The report has been signed off by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation as fracking is planning issue not an environmental issue.

Licensing and planning are two separate issues. The Committee cannot interfere in the planning process but can make the recommendation that a report comes to a future Committee meeting for further discussion from an environmental perspective.

The Chairman advised that a formal briefing would be requested based on the information paper.

**Action: Kama Wager**

**c) COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee Work Programme was noted.

**11 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is due to take place on Wednesday 6 November 2013 in Mezzanine 2, County Offices, Aylesbury at 2.00pm. There will be a pre-meeting for Committee Members at 1.30pm.

**Future dates and times for 2013**

Friday 6 December (9.30am)

**Proposed dates for 2014**

Tuesday 4 February

Tuesday 4 March

Tuesday 8 April

Tuesday 13 May

Tuesday 17 June

Tuesday 2 September

Tuesday 14 October

Tuesday 18 November

**CHAIRMAN**