



# Minutes

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

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 14 April 2015, in Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.17 pm.

This meeting was webcast. To review the detailed discussions that took place, please see the webcast which can be found at <http://www.buckscc.public-i.tv/>. The webcasts are retained on this website for 6 months. Recordings of any previous meetings beyond this can be requested (contact: [admin@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:admin@buckscc.gov.uk))

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr W Bendyshe-Brown, Mr T Butcher, Mr D Carroll (Vice-Chairman), Mr P Gomm and Mr W Whyte (Chairman)

### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Mrs L Clarke OBE, Mr D Djemil, Mr A Fowler, Mr C Oliver, Ms A Poole, Mr L Scrafton, Mrs K Sutherland (Secretary), Ms K Wager and Mr T Williams

#### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Mr Chapple OBE, Mr Dhillon and Mr Lambert.

#### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Mr Gomm declared an interest for Agenda Item 7 as Chairman of Crimestoppers. Mr Carroll also declared an interest for Agenda Item 7 as the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley.

#### **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> March were confirmed as a correct record.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



The Chairman asked if the Sustainable Drainage (SUDS) report has been taken on to Cabinet. It was agreed that the Committee Adviser would check on the progress of the report.

**ACTION: Committee Adviser**

#### **4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions.

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

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Kelly Sutherland to the meeting in her new role as Committee Adviser and reminded members that Miss Kama Wager, Committee Adviser would attend the meeting later to discuss the draft Section 106 report with members. The Chairman had recently attended a member briefing on Legal Highs. It was also noted that the Business Unit Plan for Transport, Environment and Economy 2015/16-2017/18 had been agreed by the relevant Cabinet Members. It was agreed that this would be circulated to members and a link to the Plan would be included in the minutes.

**ACTION: Committee Adviser**

<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=3896>

#### **6 COUNTRY PARKS: A BETTER DELIVERY MODEL FOR BUCKS**

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Lesley Clarke OBE, Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment, Mr Andrew Fowler, Head of Country Parks and Mr Tim Williams, Country Parks Lead Officer to the meeting. The Cabinet Member commented that the Country Parks were jewels in the crown of Buckinghamshire County Council and Andrew Fowler and Tim Williams had come up with creative ways of increasing the income generated by the Parks over the years.

The Chairman asked Mr Fowler to provide a brief introduction for members before inviting members' questions. The following main points were noted:

- As Head of Country Parks, Andrew Fowler was responsible for the strategic direction and finances of the Parks and Tim Williams was responsible for the day to day management.
- BCC has four parks, all in the South of the County, totalling 800 acres. Black Park and Langley Park had complicated ownerships arrangements with Slough Borough Council, South Bucks District Council and London County Council also owning a proportion of the property.
- The Parks were officially designated as Country Parks circa 1968 and were some of the first to be designated in the UK.
- Since 1999 the Country Parks were meant to be self-financing. This proved difficult at first but since 2005 this had been achieved and since 2010 an annual income target has been set for the Parks, over and above their operating costs.
- Black Park was the largest park, 535 acres attracting 570,000 visitors per year with 95% positive comments posted on Trip Advisor's website. Go Ape have both an Adult and

Junior course on offer at Black Park and Segway hire and bike hire are also available. In addition there is a very successful café overlooking the lake and Evergreen Forest Tots also offer pre-school activities in the Park.

- Langley Park is 151 acres, made up of more formal gardens including a large rhododendron collection which is of international importance. Langley Park recently benefitted from a £3.1million restoration project financed mainly by the Heritage Lottery Fund. There are also 178 veteran trees in the park so the site could potentially be designated as a Site of Scientific Importance (SSI). Langley Park features a small café and children's play area and attracts 170,000 visitors per year.
- Denham County Park is more informal, covering 69 acres between the River Colne and the Grand Union Canal. The Colne Valley Visitors Centre is there and the Park attracts 127,000 visitors per year. Thorney Park at 47 acres features a lake for angling. This Park was previously a landfill site.
- BCC have developed a number of projects to generate income from the Parks, but the main income is from the café, which has a turnover of approximately £500,000 and generates an income for BCC in the region of £100,000, filming licences, BCC events and income from Go Ape.
- In 2011, Martin Tett who was the Cabinet Member at the time, made provision for a development fund of £300,000 per year, over a three year period to assist with income generating initiatives. Andrew Fowler has carefully managed this fund and work is currently underway on proposals for a visitors centre at Black Park. Outline designs which are currently being costed were circulated to the Committee for information. This was likely to cost £1.5million and £722,000 remained from the development fund.
- The car park at Black Park would be redesigned over the off season. This was needed to expand parking availability in peak season and would generate increased income. Other projects being considered included extending the car park and providing indoor seating at Langley Park.
- Officers would like a view from members as to what is the best delivery model for the Country Parks in the future. Should BCC retain management of the Parks or sell them off, relinquishing control completely or perhaps consider setting up a Charitable Trust or a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC).
- Members discussed the complicated ownership arrangements which dated back to the 1940s. It was noted that South Bucks District Council received a nominal base rent from BCC each year but no other parties either received any income or contributed any funding to the upkeep of the Parks. BCC own the freehold of Denham Court Estate, which is on a 99 year lease to Buckinghamshire Golf Club and BCC pay a peppercorn rent to the Golf Club for the Denham Country Park.
- 75% of visitors to the Park come from West London, Slough, Hillingdon etc
- Members congratulated Andrew and Tim for the increasing visitor numbers to the Parks. A member commented however that he would like to see a vision for the Parks for the next 20 years and an indicator from the officers as to how the different options for delivery models could work and how they would impact on the County Council. It would also be very useful to see a proper balance sheet for the accounts, laying out clearly income, expenditure and the level of subsidy from BCC. **It was agreed that Andrew Fowler would supply the Committee with a balance sheet.**

### **ACTION: Head of Country Parks**

- Members noted that the Country Parks are self-funding and also contribute an income target each year which comes back into BCC – last year this was just under £71,000.
- The Cabinet Member advised the Committee that a reverse heat pump had been investigated for Black Park lake using energy saving funding but ultimately the pipework was going to be too costly so funding of £170,000 allocated for the project was passed back to the Place service.
- The Cabinet Member also reported that the possibility of creating additional Parks in Little Marlow or as part of the Bernwood Opportunity Zone were being considered, building on the success of the Country Parks self-financing policy.

Members discussed the future options for the Country Parks. Four years ago members were generally keen to protect and retain the Country Parks. A member suggested that an Inquiry group could be set up to assist and advise the service. The Chairman suggested that there might be synergies between the Country Parks and Green Park, which was now part of the wider Adventure Learning Foundation (ALF) ALF also included Longridge and Shortenhills. Andrew Fowler advised that they had worked with Longridge in the past, but the focus of the ALF was on Education and their sites were not public access parks, whereas the Country Parks remit was conservation, forestry and recreation. Andrew Fowler also had concerns that if the Country Parks had been incorporated into the ALF, they would have effectively subsidised the other activities, as the income generated by the Country Parks was significantly higher.

The Chairman drew the discussion to a close by outlining two options – the first was to set up a small Inquiry group to investigate further or alternatively request that the officers provide further information as suggested regarding the accounts and the complexities of ownership and then bring back a fuller report outlining the options for the future management of the Country Parks to a future Committee meeting for consideration.

The principle of setting up an Inquiry Group on Country Parks was agreed by the Committee. The Cabinet Member welcomed this and offered her support to the Inquiry Group. The Chairman agreed that Mr Bill Bendyshe-Brown would lead an Inquiry group and Mr Phil Gomm would be a member of this.

### **ACTION: Committee Adviser to liaise with Chairman on the next steps.**

The Chairman thanked Lesley Clarke OBE, Andrew Fowler and Tim Williams for attending the meeting.

## **7 LEGAL HIGHS: PREVALENCE AND IMPACTS IN BUCKS**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Huseyin Djemil, Drug and Alcohol team (DAAT) Commissioner, Mr Lee Scrafton, DAAT Commissioner and Co-ordinator and Ms Amanda Poole, Trading Standards and Community Safety Manager. Ms Poole also introduced Mr Chris Oliver who was taking over as Community Safety Manager following a career in the Police. The Chairman invited the officers to provide an overview of the work they had completed to date in relation to Legal Highs and the following main points were noted:

- In 2013, Legal Highs or New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) were mainly used by festival goers and were purchased on the dark web using Bitcoin. Now the market has matured and become more mainstream.
- In 2014, BCC commissioned a Needs Analysis which was undertaken by a team of Academics who were able to generate their own dataset. This has led to an increased understanding of the issues and the prevalence in Bucks.
- Bucks organised an inter-authority group with Northants, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Bedfordshire to share intelligence on Legal Highs and it became apparent that Bucks were leading the discussions.
- BCC have delivered training to partners such as Probation and Floating Support providers as been retained and will deliver more training in future. A Legal Highs trainer has been retained and will deliver more training in future. A practitioner forum was also held in February.
- A key issue is finding a way of contacting NPS users as they are unlikely to present at treatment centres. BCC have supported an Engagement Café in Aylesbury and are exploring the best way of establishing an online presence.
- Drug testing procedures are also being reviewed as NPS do not show up on traditional drug tests, which has implications for Safeguarding and Integrated Offender Management (IOM)
- Public Health and the Police and Crime Commissioner helped to fund the research. Public Health have shared the findings with Public Health England and John Moores University have asked to undertake a secondary analysis.
- The DAAT have delivered a members briefing and produced a short video about NPS.
- The DAAT conducted a joint operation with Trading Standards at a head shop in High Wycombe. Test purchases were made and substances were tested but nothing illegal was found. Amanda Poole reported that the South East region had been working over the last few months to identify supply routes and gather intelligence across the region. Members felt it was important to disrupt the supply chain.
- It was noted that Mephedrone, a stimulant which had previously been a legal high was now illegal and classified as a Class B drug or a Class A drug if prepared for injection. A small cohort in Aylesbury were injecting mephedrone in significant quantities and needles were being shared, leading to serious health risks.
- A member asked if it were not possible to arrest someone for causing harm if they were sharing needles, but officers explained that a virus like Hepatitis C can incubate for up to three months, so it is not immediately apparent. In addition, it would be impossible to prove who was harming who and the DAAT would prefer not to criminalise this behaviour but help individuals to change their lifestyles.
- The Bucks Herald had featured a piece on Legal Highs and although the article was quite balanced, the headline was not. The DAAT were very careful with any communications they released about NPS as any press or publicity, even if this is negative, leads to experimenting and an increase in use.
- There was a discussion about the success that Ireland have had in banning NPS use and members wondered why this approach could not be adopted within the UK. **It was agreed that officers would look into the legislation used in Ireland and report back to the Committee.**

## **ACTION: DAAT Commissioners**

- Drugs were not seen as a priority for Thames Valley Police currently, yet Legal Highs are included in the Bucks Community Safety Plan which was agreed at Cabinet yesterday. Mr Chris Oliver, new Community Safety Manager commented that whilst drugs were not seen as a priority for Thames Valley Police, the protection of vulnerable people was a priority and Legal Highs would be covered within that.
- Members congratulated the DAAT officers for the work they had done to date and for raising awareness of the Legal Highs issue, but advised that an Action Plan was now needed with input from all partners, perhaps as part of the wider Community Safety Plan. Members wanted to see more urgency.

The Chairman thanked Huseyin Djemil, Lee Scrafton, Amanda Poole and Chris Oliver for attending the meeting. It was agreed that a further update on the development of a partnership Action Plan and timelines would come back to the June 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Committee.

## **ACTION: DAAT Commissioners**

### **8 S106 DRAFT INQUIRY REPORT**

The Chairman welcomed Miss Kama Wager, Committee Adviser to the meeting and the Committee considered the draft S106 Inquiry report.

A member commented that he felt the Executive Summary could be stronger as it had missed a key point that the Inquiry group were very concerned about the lamentable loss of a number of officer roles which led to a loss of oversight, direction and income for Buckinghamshire County Council, in relation to S106.

The wording of Recommendation 3 was amended to read 'We recommend that the Cabinet Member sets out clear criteria for how *he or she* will ensure *Buckinghamshire County Council allows* for appropriate local member involvement at early stages .....

A member expressed concerns through his recent experience with dealing with S106 locally that when Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) submit proposals for S106 work their quotes are not properly market tested and he asked if a further recommendation about market testing quotes to ensure value for money could be added to the report. Another member reported that he had experience of S106 monies being inadequate for what was needed on the ground. In response, Kama Wager, Committee Adviser explained that as this issue had come up outside of the Inquiry it could not be used as evidence in the report. However she reported that internal Audit were doing some work on S106 so this could be investigated by them or alternatively the Finance, Performance and Resources (FPR) Select Committee could be asked to look into this further. The Chairman noted that TfB had signed up for a lot S106 work this year so this could be reviewed by this Committee or FPR Select Committee in a year's time.

The Committee agreed the draft report with the amendments discussed and it was agreed that the Chairman would finalise the report with Kama Wager in time for it to be presented at 11<sup>th</sup> May Cabinet.

**ACTION: Chairman and Kama Wager**

## **9 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted agenda items for forthcoming meetings which were itemised on the Work Programme. Members were asked to send any further suggestions of issues for consideration to Kelly Sutherland, Committee Adviser.

**ACTION: All members**

## **10 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015 at 10am in Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury. There will be a pre-meeting for Committee Members at 9.30am.

**CHAIRMAN**