

ENVIRONMENT POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 5 September 2011

Present: Mr Lidgate (Chairman)
Mr Bradford, Mr Clark, Mrs Wallis, Mr Walters, Mr Naylor, Mrs Plant and Mrs Royston

Also Present: Mrs Woolveridge

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the PAG held on 6 June 2011 and a virtual meeting held in July 2011 were received. With reference to minute 3 [Colne Valley Park Projects 2011/12], an error was corrected by the deletion of the word "might" from line 2 of paragraph 3.

8. LITTLEWORTH COMMON MANAGEMENT PLAN 2011 - 2021

The PAG considered a report of the Director of Services about the Littleworth Common Management Plan 2011 - 2021. The draft Management Plan (as appended to report) was the subject of a public consultation which involved distribution to key stakeholders, a public drop-in event for local residents and making it available for viewing and comment on the website. Also appended to the report were copies of the questionnaire issued as part of the consultation, the key stakeholder comments, a summary of comments from local residents and additional comments from a residents meeting on 31 May.

The PAG noted that there was general support for the Management Plan from key stakeholders and some minor amendments would deal with the comments made. Local residents too had expressed general support although concern had been expressed about two areas: the grazing proposal and the management of the trees around the pond. With regard to the grazing, a good deal of further investigation was required into the practicality of this suggestion, including careful investigation and assessment of other areas of where this seems to have been successful, before progress could be considered. As for trees in the vicinity of the ponds, these would need to be sensitively managed and certainly there should no removal of mature specimens.

The proposal for a Friends Group was welcomed and this would provide an opportunity for all interested local residents to be involved and give practical support to the management of the Common. The Chairman was looking to Jane Wallis and Nick Naylor as local Members to take a lead with the Friends Group after it was formed.

After discussion, the PAG **AGREED** to advise the Portfolio Holder that the draft Management Plan should be amended as suggested in the report, to take account of concerns expressed by residents in the public consultation, and **RECOMMEND** the Cabinet to submit the final Management Plan to the Council for adoption. Officers were also asked to investigate the forming of a Friends of Littleworth Common Group with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

9. THORNBRIDGE ROAD - PETITION

The PAG considered a report of the Director of Services presenting a residents' petition raising questions about access at a parade of shops in Thornbridge Road, Iver Heath, which had been the subject of an environmental improvement scheme in 2008.

The petition sent by a disabled resident (containing 257 signatures) requested better signage and road markings so that clearer access for wheelchairs and mobility scooters could be maintained, particularly over the tactile paving adjacent to the shops.

In response to the petition, District and County Council officers met on site to review the access arrangements. As a result of the discussions the County has agreed to carry out (at its expense) the

painting of white line 'access protection markings' at either end of the parade of shops and the installation of two bollards to discourage/prevent parking.

The PAG recognised that with the limited number of parking spaces available it was unlikely that demand for parking could be fully met. The suggested works seemed to meet the concerns expressed in the petition; it was not considered appropriate to designate any parking bay as a disabled bay at present.

The PAG **AGREED** to advise the Portfolio Holder to accept the suggestion of the County Council to carry out a consultation about yellow line marking and a one hour parking limit.

10. BEACONSFIELD COMMON LAND - CAR PARKING

The PAG considered a report bringing together information, advice and stakeholders views on achieving a greater degree of control over the currently unregulated parking on the Common Land in Beaconsfield Old Town.

The PAG noted that further investigations had not indicated any effective means of regulating parking through existing or new byelaws for the common land. Further discussions had taken place between the Portfolio Holder, representatives of the Town Council and Hall Barn Estates at a meeting in May. It was apparent that the conflicting demands of the different users of the Common Land meant that no clear consensus among the interested parties was achievable at the present time although the matter would be kept under review especially in the light of any future developments concerning on-street decriminalised parking enforcement.

The report indicated that there was an opportunity to enhance pedestrian safety and prevent some indiscriminate parking by attending to the bollards near the Saracen's Head on the corner of London End and Windsor End, and the opposite corner of Wycombe End and Windsor End. There was a sum of £243,000 in the capital programme for the phase 2 environmental improvements (currently on hold) at Beaconsfield Old Town which could be utilised to fund the work if approved.

The PAG **AGREED** to advise the Portfolio Holder that no further work be undertaken on Beaconsfield Common Land parking issue at present. However, the PAG also **AGREED** to advise the Portfolio Holder that:

- 1) £10k be allocated from the existing capital programme provision for the Phase 2 environmental improvements for the removal of 17 old metal posts and installation of some cast iron bollards in the vicinity of the Saracen's Head pub to enhance pedestrian safety and prevent unauthorised parking; and
- 2) Subject to further investigation, the replacement of a number of wooden posts in Windsor End with movable, lockable cast iron bollards be carried out at a potential further cost of £10k.

11. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PAY AND DISPLAY CAR PARKS

The PAG considered a report of the Director of Services reviewing charges for the Council's pay and display car parks.

The PAG noted that in 2010-11 the car parks had performed very well and achieved an income of £881,328 against a budget of £883,000. The 2011-12 budget had set an income target of £936,570 - a 6.1% increase. Over the first three months of the year the sale of tickets had reduced by 6% compared to the previous year and the forecast income for the year was £850,000, which if correct meant the target would be missed by £87,000. The report summarised the activity levels at each car park and a significant decline had been noted at the Gerrards Cross car parks. This coincided with the opening of the Tesco store where free parking was available. However, an increase in the use of Station Road car park was expected when the Waitrose store opened early in 2012.

With a view to increasing income in the current year and filling some of the unused spaces currently available, the PAG considered suggestions for offering discounts for season tickets at a number of car parks. It was proposed to offer discounts, for a limited period only, on the following six monthly season ticket charges:

- Jennery Lane, Burnham - £125 for 6 months (discounted from £250)

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- Neville Court, Burnham - £60 for 6 months (discounted from £90)
- Station Road, Gerrards Cross - £235 for 6 months (discounted from £470)
- The Broadway, Farnham Common - £60 for 6 months (discounted from £80)

Members felt that these discounted rates should be promoted, in particular for shop and office workers.

Turning to look at a review of the daily charges, which after consultation and lead-in time could not be implemented before April 2012, the PAG considered a number of officer suggestions aimed at meeting the proposed budget for 2012-13. There was little support for raising ticket prices by 10p across the board (+£52,000 in a full year assuming no consumer resistance). Members considered more favourably suggestions for consulting about introducing evening charges (+£20,000) and abolishing the half hour charge and having a minimum one hour charge. To mitigate the effect of this for customers, the charge for an hour at the larger car parks could be reduced from £1.30 to £1.10 and still produce an estimated increase of £95,000 in a full year. The view was expressed that there was a good case for not withdrawing the half hour charge at Burnham and Farnham Common, since the free half hour there had only been withdrawn from April 2011.

The report also gave details of two quotations from companies wishing to introduce a pay by phone system in the car parks. This would be in addition to the normal methods of payment and the best offer was from a company who had offered to do this at nil cost to the Council for a minimum of one year. The company would make its money from the charge levied on the user, believed to 20p per transaction.

After looking at a number of options for charges aimed at increasing income in 2012/13 by 2% above the 2011/12 budget, the PAG **AGREED** to advise the Portfolio Holder to carry out a consultation on the following possible changes from April 2012:

- 1) By extending charges for car parking from 6pm until 8pm;
- 2) By abolishing charges for half an hour and having a minimum of one hour, with the one hour charge at larger car parks to be reduced from £1.30 to £1.10; and
- 3) As for 2) above, but retaining the half hour charge at Burnham and Farnham Common at the 30p rate.

In order to promote take up of currently underused spaces in car parks and increase income in the current year, the PAG **AGREED** to advise the Portfolio Holder that discounted season tickets, available for purchase for a period of one month from 1 December to 31 December 2011, be offered at the following car parks:

- Station Road, Gerrards Cross - £235 for 6 months
- Jennery Lane, Burnham - £125 for 6 months
- Neville Court, Burnham - £60 for 6 months
- The Broadway, Farnham Common - £60 for 6 months

Further, the PAG **AGREED** to advise the Portfolio Holder to allow a Company to operate a one year trial of a pay by phone scheme in the Council car parks at nil cost to the Council, subject to an agreed capped charge from the Company to the user.

12. WASTE POLICY REVIEW

The PAG received a report about a Government review of waste policy published in June 2011, and noted the potential impact on the Council and the Bucks Waste Partnership.

The PAG noted the following:

- While it was acknowledged that waste services were a matter for local authorities to develop, the Government had pledged to help councils increase the frequency and quality of rubbish collections.
- The Government is keen to increase 'recycling on the go' and will support councils working with local businesses on this.
- Funding will be available to local authorities for the development of incentive schemes to reward recycling. The Waste Partnership was likely to submit a bid for in the next round of funding.

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- SBDC was leading the way on developing a countywide anti-litter campaign and this sat well with the Government's view that litter was a priority area.
- The Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) was due to end in March 2013 as landfill tax was seen as a more effective driver in reducing landfill. SBDC may need to operate commercial waste collections in future if requested.

The Portfolio Holder and PAG noted the report.

13. PLASTIC BOTTLE RECYCLING - UPDATE

The PAG was informed that the trial of collecting plastic bottles for recycling was going very well. These were collected in Beaconsfield on a Monday and Denham on a Friday. Further progress would be reported to a future meeting.

14. FUTURE WASTE SERVICES DISCUSSION REPORT

The PAG considered a comprehensive report of the Director of Services presenting the background, estimated costs and operational implications of changing refuse and recycling services in the District with a view to establishing a preferred way forward for the future.

The report set out the background on the materials recycled by the Council. For every tonne of paper, card, glass, cans, plastic bottles and foil recycled, Bucks CC paid SBDC £43.93 in recycling credits (since it did not have to go to landfill). This amounted to over £200k per year. The remaining materials were recycled under several joint contracts, the income from which varied from month to month in line with national material values.

In order for all the authorities in Bucks to move forward and meet targets and contractual arrangements, the current joint working arrangements were due to be formalised in an Inter Authority Agreement (IAA). This would set down the responsibilities of the Waste Collection Authorities (Districts) and the Waste Disposal Authority (County), agree mutual targets and aims in line with the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy towards a 60% recycling target by 2025, and financial arrangements and administration details for recycling credits and tipping away payments. The detail of the IAA was the subject of ongoing negotiations between the parties, a key part of which concerned the procurement by Bucks CC of an anaerobic digestion food waste treatment facility, to be dependent on the Districts committing to collect the food waste to 'feed' the facility.

The report also gave details of the service operated by other Districts including their future proposals. Chiltern DC's contract with Biffa was due to expire on 31 October 2012 and this was in the early stages of being re-tendered together with Wycombe DC. This may affect the joint Paper Sorting Facility contract which can terminate if two of the three parties withdraw. It could also affect the Council's contractor's use of the London Road Depot if more services are concentrated there.

The PAG recognised that there were a lot of variables which would affect the final decision as to the shape of the Council's future waste service. However the current situation where there were two different collection systems in operation needed to be resolved and a uniform collection and recycling service for all residents introduced. Whether to collect recycling source separate or co-mingled and whether food waste can be tipped in the same location as refuse were also important factors. The Part II report gave estimated costs for a number of the different options.

The PAG agreed that full and careful consultation as the Council moved forward with changes was key to its success. (This had worked well during the introduction of the trial scheme). The PAG considered that a service which could be 'sold' as the best option technically, environmentally as well as financially would be most likely to succeed.

The PAG **AGREED** to advise the Portfolio Holder that the best all round service design for initial planning purposes would be:

- Fortnightly refuse collection from a wheelie bin
- Fortnightly recycling collection (paper, card, glass, cans and plastic bottles)
- Weekly food waste collections from a 25l "bucket"

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- Chargeable garden waste collection service with a potential start date of 2014, since 2012 was likely to be unrealistic on both cost and technical grounds.

Further information was required before consideration could be given to whether co-mingled recycling collections or source separated paper and card recycling collections were preferred. The PAG also **AGREED** to advise the Portfolio Holder that there should be a full programme of public consultation leading up to the change using focus groups and further information for Members.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would await the outcome further negotiations before recommending the terms of the Inter Authority Agreement, including the SBDC share of the Avoided Disposal Savings allocations to come from Bucks CC, to Cabinet and Council for a final decision.

15. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

No reports were presented but the PAG noted that major changes were due to take place in the organisation of the Colne Valley Park, about which a report would be made in due course.

16. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

Future Waste Services Discussion Report

(Paras 3 and 4 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person and relating to consultations/negotiations in connection with a labour relations matter)

The PAG considered a Part II report containing estimated payments that might be received if the Paper Sorting Facility closed and the estimated capital and revenue costs of each method of collecting recyclable material.

The meeting terminated at 8.25 pm