



Buckinghamshire Council

Chesham & Villages Community Board

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham & Villages Community Board held on Thursday 11 March 2021 in Via Video Conference, commencing at 7.00 pm and concluding at 8.20 pm

Members present

A Bacon, P Birchley, N Brown, E Culverhouse, A Garth, P Jones, J MacBean, N Southworth and F Wilson

Others in attendance

Ken Austin - Chesham Environmental Group
Anne Birkett – Cllr for Latimer & Ley Hill Parish Council
Chris Brown – Cllr for Cholesbury-cum-St. Leonards Parish Council
Andrew Clark - Chesham Environmental Group
Bill Chapple – Cabinet Member for Buckinghamshire Council
Dave Cooper
Marco Dias - Officer for Buckinghamshire Council
Richard Dunn - Zone 9 Cycling group – Sustainable Chesham
Annabel Foley - Sustainable Chesham
Phillip Folly - Chesham Environmental group
Fiona Harding – Sustainable Chesham
Paul Harding – Re-Wilding Project
Phil Harrison - Zone 9 Cycling group – Sustainable Chesham
Mike Johnstone
Rosi Jordan – Sustainable Chesham
Joan Lherbier – Cllr for Chartridge Parish Council
John Ormiston
Vanessa Martin – Cllr for Gt. Missenden Parish Council
Vicki Mistry – Sustainable Chesham
Jenny and Chris Pearson - Chesham Environmental Group
Alison Phillips – Sustainable Chesham
Layla Redway – Sustainable Chesham
Mark Shaw - Cabinet Member for Buckinghamshire Council
Aneta Stanc - Chesham Environmental Group
Colin Sully – Cllr for The Lee Parish Council
David Sutherland – Officer for Buckinghamshire Council
Roger Watts – Cllr for Ashley Green Parish Council
Hannah Webley - Chesham & District Natural History Society and Chesham Enviro. Group
Pam Wignall – Zone 9 Cycling group – Sustainable Chesham

Officers in Attendance

C Green and L Hornby

Agenda Item

1 Welcome and Introduction by Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the focus of the meeting was the environment which was a priority for this Community Board.

The new school crossing for Chiltern Hills Academy School in Chartridge Lane was now published for consultation and the Chairman urged members to respond as it was essential that this school had a safe school crossing due to the high numbers of pupils who walk to and from school.

Welcomed Caroline Green, the new Co-ordinator for this Community Board.

The Chairman referred to the report from Thames Valley Police which had previously been circulated.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from David Martin.

3 Declarations of Interest

4 Minutes from the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 were agreed as a true record subject to the addition of listing the Parish Councillors in attendance who were:

Parish Councillor C Sully – The Lee Parish Council

Parish Councillor C Brown – Cholesbury-cum-St. Leonards Parish Council

Parish Councillor J Lherbier – Chartridge Parish Council

Parish Councillor R Watts – Ashley Green Parish Council

Parish Councillor V Martin – Great Missenden Parish Council

5 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

6 Update about Buckinghamshire Council's Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Bill Chapple.

Councillor Chapple introduced himself and explained that he was the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change and David Sutherland who was the Head of Climate Change and Environment.

Councillor Chapple explained that at the 16 February Cabinet meeting, it was decided this strategy would be taken out to Community Boards and schools. The key points of the presentation were:

- The Council accounted for less than 1% of emissions in the county although this would be looked at to see what improvements could be made, such as looking at council buildings

and how a direct approach could be identified. Understanding the connection between the Council and emission source would lead to planning effective actions.

- Sixty actions had been identified and were within the strategy and had been arranged in order of the degree of control or influence that the Council had from direct sources, suppliers and partners.
- Highlighting the strategy of helping communities to address climate change which was particularly relevant for groups such as the Community Boards it was hoped that support would be given to local projects ambitions.
- It was noted that support was being given to two groups who would be planting trees in suitable places along highways/roads.
- In reference to Emissions Reduction Target. It was hoped the emissions would be reduced by at least 75% compared to the 1990 baseline (this was the baseline year that all national targets were based on). This compared to the UK National Target of 68% reduction by 2030 based on those 1990 baseline figures. This meant that the Council was setting a quicker pace than the national pace.
- By 2040 it was hoped to achieve a 90% reduction with a 100% reduction reached by 2050. It was also hoped that the county would be carbon neutral by 2050 although it was hoped this could be achieved earlier.
- Tree planting projects could help in achieving net zero emissions as it provides a negative emission or carbon offset which would lead to net zero.
- The aim was to plant a tree for every man, woman and child in Buckinghamshire; a figure which was, currently, approximately 543,000 although this figure could increase following the national Census due to take place in March 2021. However, the figure would have increased by 2030 due to all the development taking place within the county.
- The new woodland would absorb between 300 and 400 tonnes of carbon dioxide over 30 years and would require in excess of 200 hectares of land to accommodate the number of trees.
- Once the programme was completed, it was estimated that a total of 60,000 tonnes of carbon would be absorbed from the atmosphere therefore reaching a net zero emissions figure.
- The tree planting would also have other benefits such as supporting biodiversity gains, flood alleviation and amenity access for the public.
- An outline programme of works had been laid out. It was noted that it was a deliverable programme which would ensure that net zero emissions was achieved. It was noted that funds would be put aside for the maintenance of the trees which were due to be planted. 200 acres had been identified for the planting of these trees although the location was yet to be announced.

In answer to questions it was noted that:

- The Council was working with DEFRA. Buckinghamshire had been singled out to be a pilot for Nature Recovery Strategy – one of five so had regular contact with ministerial contacts. Currently working with the Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust. HS2 stated that 2.3 million trees would be planted on 290 hectares which meant it would be very dense and would be doomed to failure. No indication of how much maintenance would be involved had been given. When asked how many trees HS2 had taken down the response was that they did not know. The Council had been working on its strategy before HS2 had done anything so planting these trees would be planted in any case. It was noted that the Government wanted 17% coverage of trees with 75% of trees to be planted in first five years.
- Under the Government Bill there were two key areas which would mandate. The first was to request Local Authorities to produce a local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Biodiversity Net Gain would be introduced into the planning system.

- In reference to the pilot scheme, a core team within Buckinghamshire Council also included DEFRA, Natural England and the Environment Agency were all working together and a series of workshops were run throughout February 2021. Areas would be identified as to where habitat could be restored or created. This would link in with the new Environmental Land Management Scheme which was to replace the Common Agricultural Policy.
- It was noted that to achieve the reductions in emissions would mean a change to our culture such as fewer foreign holidays, keeping a mobile phone for longer than previously, e.g. not changing a handset on an annual basis. Our culture needs to change to achieve carbon neutral. Work within the buildings the council owned were being looked at, for instance to place solar panels on buildings or in car parks.
- In relation to HS2 taking trees down and being informed of how many they have or intend to take down. It was noted that HS2 had special powers and under those special powers had taken down very many trees and therefore the number taken down could not be known.
- Once discussions with farmers and landowners had taken place the public would be notified of where the tree planting would take place. By following government guidance, the pot of funds had been increased from £5 million to £10 million.
- Discussions were taking place with the Council's own Highways team to replace the 189 trees that had been taken down for valid reasons. Agreement had been reached that from the 2021 financial year onwards, if a tree needed to be taken down, it would be replaced.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Chapple and David Sutherland for their informative presentation.

7 Presentations

Update about Communi-Tree Project

Councillor Nick Southworth explained that trees disappeared over the years and erosion of urban environment, the loss of tree lined streets had detrimental effect on the community. It was noted that pollution at the front of a house was reduced by 60% if trees were located in front of a property. Trees also reduced flooding and captured carbon among the many other benefits. Since 2017 vast amounts of work had been undertaken to get to a point to enable planting to take place. Funding had been approved and the Town Council had also approved £10,000 which meant that staff could be trained and equipment bought. CAT scanners were being bought and work with Buckinghamshire Council on licensing / site surveys was being undertaken in terms of getting people involved. In respect of Community engagement residents had been invited to nominate sites and following that response a long list of sites had been nominated. This list was being worked through. Residents would take ownership of the trees to maintain them. Covid had interrupted the work of planting trees. At first 35 trees were planted in the first few months of 2020. Covid then put everything on hold and no mass planting could be undertaken. As of December 2020 planting resumed and a total of 75 trees had been planted. The figure would be brought up to 100 within the next two weeks. A more ambitious project was being planned as the aspiration was for 1,000 trees to be planted in the next 2 years. It was noted that one of the biggest complaints was that residents had not got trees.

In answer to questions, it was noted that:

- Residents had contacted Communi-Tree asking whether it was possible to donate trees

to the scheme. It was stated this was being investigated further.

Update about Re-Wilding Project

Paul Harding explained that there was a strip of land at the back of Lowndes Park along where Chiltern Academy was located which was mainly used by dog walkers who stuck mainly to the paths. He reported that he had been to the site with Jim Ashton, one of the country's biggest rewilding experts, discussing putting in a rewilded woodland. The advantages were that the site is south facing with runoff down to Berry Pond and it was close to the town centre. There used to be woodland there around 150 years previously although there was some woodland on private land to the south of the site. It was hoped that a full ecosystem would be put in place with deadwood for wildlife, shrubs around the edges and wild flowers along with habitat boxes for owls, kestrels as well as smaller birds.

The stage had now been reached whereby work could start during the next planting season, i.e. next winter. Being Town Council land permission would need to be obtained. It was noted that there was a budget of between £5,000 and £6,000 which was not considered large but it was hoped that the local community would get involved and help with the project.

A baseline survey would be carried out for the whole park or at least the site put aside for the rewilding project although cost was unknown at the moment. Funding would be applied for via the Friends of Lowndes Park.

In response to questions it was noted that:

- A mix of trees would be planted. There would be about 10 species of canopy trees of different heights so as to be able to maintain the whole area's attractive views. Then there were about 15 species of shrub etc.

It was agreed that the slides would be shared with Board Members.

Update about Public Health Community Grow Project

Sally Hone reported on two projects being delivered by Public Health within Chesham area both related to food growing. It was noted that there had been an increase of the use of Food Banks during the past year and work was ongoing, exploring how to support the more deprived areas of the county, helping them to achieve a healthier diet and lifestyle through community growing and cooking projects. The aim was to develop a more sustainable infrastructure and create a resilient local food solution for future years. It was hoped that communities would grow fresh produce on communal ground thereby supporting each other. Education and support would help communities gain the knowledge and skills to grow produce which, in turn, would lead to help develop nutritious meals.

The project would support communities for a year after which time they would take ownership of the sites, led by community champions. It was hoped to develop five sites across the county and while the growing season had begun sites would be up and running as soon as possible. Each site would be led by an expert gardener who had experience of setting up community gardens and who got local communities to engage. An expert gardener was either an individual or organization with such experience. The aim was that the expert gardener would support the community for a year after which time they would begin to slowly step back to allow the community to take complete ownership of the site. During the second year the community would run the site with guidance being given by the expert gardener if required. Each site would

be allocated a small pot of money to ensure that tools could be purchased as well as seeds etc. although it was hoped that communities would make donations. It was also hoped that partnerships with local garden centres could be set up as they could also support the scheme.

Another aim was to encourage other communities to set up their own growing gardens and this would be achieved by developing a website giving advice on resources, tool kits etc. and would also offer a training package.

The final element of the project was to set up a cooking project in the Spring in collaboration with communities who were involved in growing as well as wider stakeholders.

Within Chesham, 4 target wards had been identified and sites sought within those wards by contacting organisations from housing associations to Town Council etc. Following investigations a suitable site had been identified near the Waterside Primary Academy although the school did not use it. However, there were plans to develop the area to a forest school, school growing site and would house the community garden. Work with the school's headteacher was ongoing.

Next steps were identified as:

- Would the community support the initiative
- An expert gardener had been tentatively identified although further suggestions were welcome
- To identify local community champions to support the expert gardener. Some individuals had already come forward
- To support and cultivate the land. Any support through equipment and manpower was welcome

The Board was informed that Restore Hope in Latimer were to distribute 100 growing kits regardless of the size of land – or lack of land – an individual or household had. These kits were for windowsill, balcony or small garden. These kits were being distributed to families who were currently receiving support through Restore Hope with the aim to introduce them to growing their own food. All equipment was provided along with guides and recipe cards showing them what to do with their produce.

The Chairman thanked Sally Hone and noted that an offer from Work Aid in Chesham would help to provide tools for the scheme.

Sustainable Chesham

Vicky Mistry explained that the scheme was part of the Transition Town network and had been running for 10 years. It encouraged the community to work together to be more sustainable. It was noted that the Local Produce Market was popular and showed how sustainable Chesham worked well with the town.

Tree planting: 300 trees had been received from the Woodland Trust which had been successfully planted, most trees were used for community asset with some being distributed to residents. The initiative would be repeated next year.

The Community Energy Switch Programme encouraged residents to change to clean energy. Information was available to ensure that residents were able to be fully informed about suppliers and their sustainability therefore giving the resident the power to choose a more sustainable supplier. Many could swap and people were able to then see their carbon footprint.

Sustainable Chesham had partnered with the Clean Switch Initiative – they were a leading renewable energy comparison website.

Repair Café: this café encouraged people to not throw broken goods away but volunteers were available to help people learn how to fix/mend their broken items. During the pause, caused by Covid, the teams had been exploring venues, funding and repairers were being sought and there had been interest from community, Work Aid and the Artful Menders. Some micro-funding had been received from the Transition Network. The first of what was hoped to be a monthly event was starting in May (suitably socially distanced).

Community Assembly Series which was initiated to support the Town Council's Action Plan and two events had taken place, one to engage residents to discover what their priorities were and the second on the subject of water out of which 5 projects were identified to be implemented across the town.

It was noted that with other schemes the group was very active and it was hoped that the Community Board could assist with Sustainable Chesham in the future.

Zone-9 Cycle Group

Richard Dunn explained that Zone-9 Cycling Group was set up a year ago by Sustainable Chesham.

The group believed it to be essential and necessary to increase cycling and walking space in Chesham if the local population were to become healthier. In reference to tackling the climate change emergency it was believed there was a need to take action now, cutting down on motorized vehicles on the roads in Chesham. This would encourage more people walk, cycle or use public transport.

Cycle routes for Chesham had been identified for all types of cyclists and a Cycle Hub was proposed which was identified as a need. It was noted there was already a cycle repair shop and café all-in-one, but a cycle hub would be a positive addition to the town. Some councils had already installed pop-up cycle lanes

During lockdown more people had been out on bikes along with many walkers and runners although little has happened in Chesham. It was noted that the government was providing the Council with funds and that the Council was commencing with its cycling and walking infrastructure plan and the aim was for Chesham to be a part of the plan.

The Zone-9 Cycling Group were asking the Community Board to fully endorse their proposals; to be pro-active and that Buckinghamshire Council be approached to ensure part of larger plan was carried out rather than wait for the Council to approach locally. Also, to seek any appropriate funding to ensure that appropriate cycling and walking space was provided. The Cycling Group would provide any help it could. Action for the Community Board was needed now.

In answer to questions, it was noted that:

- Involvement with Phil Harrison looking at the Zone-9 proposition but that there were issues with it. Cycle lanes had not appeared all over the county and those that had been looked at had presented problems and that numerous officers had been made aware of all details within the Zone-9 proposal but that there were issues with it. The first tranche of government funding looked at shared spaces with cycles and vehicles. The second

tranche specifically looked at now having shared spaces because of problems with the first tranche. The plans had been carefully assessed against both sets of criteria for both sets of funding. The relevant officer had now left the Council but had sent a detailed list of how Zone-9 could improve their proposition. Councillor MacBean stated that she was in contact with the officer's replacement who was attempting to identify another officer to work with the Group.

- That Chesham was the third largest town in Buckinghamshire and therefore had a major A road which brought traffic through the town and meant there was certain criteria to be met particularly in light of national safety concerns.
- The Town Council was committed to taking this work forward. It was hoped that the cycle hub could be built into the 'gym and swim' expansion plan.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers for their very informative presentations.

8 Sub-Groups Updates

Village Forum

Board members noted the report circulated with the agenda.

Covid Support Group

Board members noted the report circulated with the agenda and the Chairman wished thanks to be passed on to everyone who had helped during the lockdowns over the past year.

HS2 Update

Councillor Colin Sully explained that the process of engagement with HS2 had improved. Regular meeting jointly with the Missendens Community Board, HS2 and Buckinghamshire officers were now taking place along with Members interest group and it was noted that the Parish Council also had regular engagement. Unfortunately while the engagement had improved, the content had not. There had been controversy over the felling of oak trees in Leather Lane and the issue had escalated and that the Council, the Chiltern Conservation Board and Cheryl Gillan (the local MP) were all now involved. The contractors had now agreed to review their tree felling plans on Leather Lane and would present an update the day after this meeting.

There was now a major impact on the landscape issue. There was also a problem with potential traffic on roads. Attempts were being made to get a better understanding of risk and mitigation of risk of levels of traffic on the A413 which remained unresolved. It was understood that Buckinghamshire Council were holding a number of Schedule 17 applications which were awaiting approval but had not, as yet, received sufficient information from HS2.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Sully for his informative report and update.

Town Team Update

Councillor Jane MacBean reported that the focus was to re-open High Street by encouraging residents to come out of isolation and rejoin daily life when safe to do so.

The Town Hall was undertaking excellent work as vaccination centre.

It had been agreed to put on low key public events to put some life back into the High Street.

The pedestrianisation of Market Square was now in place and it was noted that planters would replace the barriers currently in place in the town centre.

Town Team were looking at ways to support Chesham Town app which had the potential to be a good vehicle for retail and traders in the town as well as community organisations and the council.

Funding Group

Caroline Green reported that the funding group met on 21 January 2021 for the third round of funding. Among the applications discussed were Chenies Footpath which the group agreed to put on hold pending revised final costs and detailed breakdown from Transport for Bucks with a revised bid. This revision had been received today (11 March 2021) and would be discussed at the next meeting of the group due to be held on 22 March 2021. The other application was from Transitions UK which was a mentoring and support project for young people at risk of offending or criminal exploitation. The bid was for £4,000 which was turned down by the group as they believed this should be funded centrally.

For the fourth round of funding, the group met on 8 March 2021 where the Chenies Footpath was raised again although this had already been mentioned. Another application was from the Big Community Takeaway with a bid for £2,500 to continue the supply of hot meals to those people who had been affected by the Covid-19 situation. This bid was recommended for approval by the funding group.

Councillor Emily Culverhouse recommended the application for approval by the Board.

AGREED.

- 9 Date of Next Meeting**
Thursday 24 June 2021 at 7.00pm.