



Chesham & Villages Community Board minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Chesham & Villages Community Board held on Thursday 27 October 2022 in Via MS Teams - Virtual, commencing at 6.00 pm and concluding at 7.14 pm.

BC Councillors present

P Birchley (Chairman), Q Chaudhry, E Culverhouse, M Fayyaz, J MacBean and N Southworth

Town/Parish Councils and other organisations present

Ms J Lherbier (Chartridge Parish Council), Mr C Sully (The Lee Parish Council) and Mr R Watts (Ashley Green Parish Council)

Others in attendance

Ms J Lherbier (Chartridge Parish Council), R Tackley, Mr K Wilcox (Action Coach) and K Farooqi.

Agenda Item

1 Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting. The Chairman highlighted the attendance of Kevin Goad, Director of Highways and Technical Services at Buckinghamshire Council. Kevin was the Community Board's new corporate director who replaced Steve Bambrick. The focus of this meeting was the environment.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Mike Stannard, Cllr Ruth Fowler and Vicki Mistry from Sustainable Chesham.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held 28th July were agreed as an accurate record.

5 Chiltern Conservation Board

Steph Horn from Chiltern Conservation Board gave a presentation on the Chess Smarter Water Catchment project. The slides were appended to these minutes.

The following points were highlighted:

- The project received funding from Thames Water as part of an initiative to

look at catchment based approaches and different issues in the area.

- The Chess river channel and water inside the catchment was land surrounding. The project would aim to improve water quality by working with farmers to change land management practices.
- The team leading on the project included Kate Heppell from St Marys University, a farming officer, engagement officer and a citizen science co-ordinator.
- The six key themes of the River Chess Strategy were improving water quality, managing flow, control of invasive non-native species, improving wildlife corridors, involving people and working together. Funding of £3million was available for the first five years of the project. The project was currently in year two of delivery.
- The first year involved documenting the state of the River Chess and assessing data from multiple sources and included recording the day zero understanding. The aim was to promote greater biodiversity whilst building on historic improvements made to the river catchment. New fencing had been installed to prevent cattle crouching for water and squashing the river banks vegetation. This had improved biodiversity and encouraged wildflowers to grow attracting bees and butterflies.
- The key activities in the second year of the project included greater capacity for water monitoring, volunteer's citizens' science project, land surveys, assessing contaminates, monitoring interventions put in place and river restoration project. Volunteers had been trained to undertake surveys for the project with intake increased due to popularity within the community.
- The next steps of the project would include expanding tracking the impact project, working with Chilterns Conservation Board, monitoring of butterflies and birds to inform the catchment and help understand the ANOB. There would be an increase in ground delivery and additional work with volunteer groups, land owners and charities.

Further information on the project and catchment area could be found at: <https://chesssmarterwatercatchment.org/>

A grant of up to £5,000 was available to improve the area in the Chess catchment: <https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=f9a249e15a8340eb84dcf3b69203dce3&extent=-0.8043,51.615,-0.3467,51.7939>

A member of the Board highlighted the flow of the river, it was advised work was underway with partners to achieve a better flow. There was a government initiative relating to chalk streams and ways to abstract water lower down the river to protect biodiversity.

The issue of sewage in the river was highlighted and what steps the water companies were taking to address this. It was advised Thames Water had an environmental project researching this issue. It was anticipated further information would be available in November regarding Chesham sewage treatment works.

Trevor Brawn from Sustainable Chesham provided an update on projects and initiatives, further information was appended to these minutes.

The following points were highlighted:

- The Repair Café Chesham successfully hosted twelve events with 232 items checked and 154 successfully repaired. The café took place the last Saturday of each month and hosted a variety of repairers with different skills. Alongside the repair café local produce was available. The Community Board funded the café to purchase a portable appliance testing kit as half of the items brought to the café were electronics. The next event would be held on 26th November at Chesham Town Hall from 10am-1pm.
- The Zone 9 Cycling Group were highlighting safer cycling in an attempt to encourage new cyclists, promote better health and reduce pollution. The aim was to make Chesham a location hub for walking, e-bikes and cycling whilst being wheelchair friendly.
- A sustainable fashion kids Swish event would be held in the new year at Chesham Town Hall. The free event would allow attendees to bring up to five items of clothing aged 3-12 in exchange for five items to take away.
- Sustainable Chesham was working with Chesham Town Council to increase biodiversity across the community. Wildflowers had been planted in the Meadows, Berkhamsted playing fields and Co-op fields. The team were also developing relationships with local schools in an effort to improve field management. There were 875 trees planted in the last year and more would be planted in the new year. The community orchard in Lowndes Park which produced local varieties of produce was sponsored by local community groups. Residents were advised how to leave more space in their gardens to promote wildlife.
- The leaking homes roadshow in conjunction with Bucks Community Energy would be launched this winter to educate residents how to save energy in their homes. Sustainable Chesham secured £1700 funding from the Community Board in February which was used to purchase thermal imaging cameras, training and implementation of energy surveys for households. The scheme would be rolled out this November and for a fee of £20 residents would receive a report to show where the greatest heat loss in the property occurred and how to reduce this.
- The group had taken part in community assemblies to promote better communication between local groups and to discuss how to promote water supply, reduce pollution and carbon footprints. There had been good progress on reducing dependence on cars, stopping the decline of local wildlife, how to source food locally and residential developments.
- A new initiative and strategy would be developed with other local groups to try and eradicate plastic bags from Chesham.
- Sustainable Chesham had a stall at the Chesham produce market which was useful to find out residents' environmental concerns and activities.

The Chair commended the wide range of projects Sustainable Chesham had successfully achieved and highlighted these initiatives were also relevant to the

villages surrounding Chesham.

A member of the Board queried if safer cycling around St Marys Way, Chesham had been considered. It was highlighted the road could be a danger area for cyclists with limited space for cyclists and two lanes for vehicles. It was confirmed the new infrastructure plan for the town and neighbourhood plan would look into these issues and seek to provide safer and better opportunities for cyclists.

A member of the Board asked if electric scooters had been considered for the Chesham area as they had been introduced in other local towns. Whilst Sustainable Chesham had not considered this they could be introduced after an assessment of the area.

Further information for residents to register for the leaky homes survey were appended to these minutes.

7 Formal Community Board updates

Ross Tackley, Community Board Manager provided an update on funding and community projects.

The Community Board had an annual budget of £111,000 with £21,000 spent on projects. A further £45,000 had been allocated to projects in the pipeline. The projects funded by the Board were listed on the slides appended to these minutes.

It was highlighted there were 88 Ukrainian guests in the Chesham Board area with 40 sponsor host families. After a six month stay with hosts guests were required to move in with new sponsors or into privately rented accommodation. There was a request for any residents who could be re-matched with Ukrainian guests to contact either Ross Tackley or Ryan Robinson. It was noted the re-matched process would not require a visa application as many guests were settled and working in the area.

The Opportunity Bucks programme was a local response to the governments national levelling up campaign to promote better opportunities for all residents. The programme would encourage ward partnerships and involve key stakeholders in the community. There would be a tour of the Chesham ward and town centre on 24th January 2023.

Buckinghamshire Council would run a welcoming spaces initiative this winter to provide warm spaces for residents in libraries and council offices. Members were advised to contact Ross Tackley with any suggestions of venues and a toolkit would be provided.

A member of the Board queried if ancillary building or annexes would attract council tax if they host Ukrainian guests. It was confirmed these properties would not be subject to additional council tax charges if they applied through the Ukraine scheme.

8 Community Matters

The Chairman highlighted no public questions had been received and there were currently no Buckinghamshire Council public consultations for Chesham.

A Member of the Board advised Chesham Town Council would launch a consultation on the environment, sustainability, heritage assets and use of public spaces linked with the neighbourhood plan.

The Chairman welcomed the Service Director for Highways and Technical Services Kevin Goad. It was highlighted Buckinghamshire had a new maintenance contract with Balfour Beatty and design and traffic modelling contract with Atkins starting in April 2023. Kevin would visit Chesham and the surrounding villages for a walkabout to find out highways issues affecting the area.

Representatives from Save Leather Lane provided an update on the campaign. There had been key collaboration between local residents, councillors and community groups to support the cause to protect the trees and bats in Leather Lane. There were ongoing bat surveys which helped the campaign and ecological argument for saving the trees. Leather Lane was a key connector of 7km of green space in the Chiltern ANOB with much of the surrounding area already decimated by HS2. It was hoped the campaign would achieve charitable status in the near future. Local residents were educated on bat conservation and bat walks had proved popular.

9 Board Discussion and Action Points

Ross Tackley, Community Board Manager provided an update on action points. The emergency preparedness of the ward had been assessed and the community resilience team would hold a workshop in November. The team would explain the process in emergencies such as flooding and natural disasters. Discussions were underway with Parish Councils to formulate community emergency plans and toolkits would be provided.

There would be a Thames Valley Police Neighbourhood policy forum meeting at Chesham Town Hall on 3rd November. Residents were encouraged to attend and complete a county wide survey which closed on 30th October.

It was advised a schedule 17 application for Leather Lane would be submitted in the new year. This would allow further time to consider the design and construction of HS2 in this area.

Visit Chesham had captured drone footage and gathered local information on Chesham and the surrounding villages which would be available on their website.

A member of the Board highlighted the application for construction of the Bowood Lane overbridge had been submitted by HS2 to Buckinghamshire Council. The Council had rejected the application citing environmental considerations. HS2 had appealed the decision and the planning inspector would assess the application. The Lee Parish Council and Wendover and Chiltern Conservation Board submitted representations to Buckinghamshire Council. There were concerns if the appeal was

successful for HS2 the implications this could have on the Leather Lane overbridge.

Ross Tackley, Community Board Manager would send monthly updates on the Board and projects. Further applications for funding would be welcomed and there would be a greater focus on reaching out to Ukrainian guests.

A member of the Board highlighted the repairs to local roads was unsatisfactory making certain routes unsafe for cyclists due to potholes. It was confirmed there was a dedicated team responsible for ensuring repairs to roads were co-ordinated and to a quality standard. The approach to dealing with road defects would be changed going forward.

10 Date and theme of next meeting

Thursday 26th January 6pm

Sustainable Chesham's presentation to the Community Board (CB) – 27 October 2022

We are very grateful to the CB for allocating the SC Team to present an update of the activities of Sustainable Chesham.

My intention is to briefly cover the current areas of work of the SC Team, and then to answer any questions that the Board members may have. :

Repair Café

We have now held 12 Repair Cafes and we have looked at 232 items, of which 154 were successfully repaired, and a further 36 were given advice as to how the items could be repaired. The Cafes have generally taken place on the same day as the Local Food Produce Market on the 4th Saturday in each month in Chesham Town Centre.

We invite repairers with a varied selection of skills and then try to match the requirements of our residents with one of our repair crew. The prime purpose is to save the purchase of a replacement product, and to reduce the number of items going to landfill.

We are grateful to the CB for the very generous grant we received earlier this year, which helped us to purchase Portable Appliance Testing kits, to allow us to carry out electronic repairs in line with insurance requirements. About half of our repairs have been electronic to date, so this demonstrates how important it is that we are now able to offer the service.

The next event will be on Saturday 26th November at the Town Hall (10am-1pm).

Zone-9 Cycling

This started as a small group within SC that felt we should be doing much more, to facilitate safer cycling and walking in and around Chesham, to reduce pollution by providing an alternative to driving into the Town centre, and to encourage new people to take up cycling and walking to improve their health. We all know how hilly Chesham is, but with the introduction of re-chargeable electric bikes, even long, steep hills can be negotiated with the power assistance.

As a group we have received considerable support from Chesham Town Council and Buckinghamshire Council, to enable the funding of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The preparation of the Plan is progressing well and we should be in a position shortly to consider the methodology for a public consultation.

One of our key aims is to make Chesham a much more cycle and wheelchair friendly town, and we are planning to eventually create a cycling hub in Chesham which will be the location for a number of cycling and walking related activities.

Sustainable Fashion Swish Event

This is a way of recycling good quality children's clothing to save on the high carbon footprint of buying new clothes, and discarding older ones that no longer fit the person they were bought for.

The next event early in the New Year will be a clothing exchange event for children ages 3 to 12. Up to 5 items can be taken in the late morning, in exchange for a 'swish' ticket which

provides free entry in the afternoon, where the selection of up to 5 items of clothing, brought in by others, can be viewed, selected and taken away.

Biodiversity

This is another area where we have an impressive record, working with the Town Council to increase biodiversity on many of the sites owned by the Council. We have been directly involved in the creation of wildflower meadows at the Berkhamstead Field Community Meadow and the Co-op Fields and have developed a procedure for introducing selective roadside verge management for biodiversity. We are now involved in a new scheme at Nashleigh Hill Recreation Ground.

We also are developing relations with various local schools including Chesham Grammar School, Chesham Prep School, Ley Hill School and Chartridge School helping them to improve the way their school grounds are managed and to consider introducing various biodiversity enhancements. Our team is regularly contacted by the Bucks and Milton Keynes Environmental Record Centre when they are looking for information about local areas because we have built a sound environmental knowledge, and it can save them a trip out to Chesham, if we are able to provide the information they need.

Our team has now organised the local planting of 875 trees to date and we are expecting another 500 tree whips to arrive shortly for allocating and planting out this winter.

We also maintain the Community orchard in Lowndes Park which was started in 2013. Only traditional, local varieties were planted from a local supplier, many of which were sponsored by local groups. Orchards are known to be excellent areas for biodiversity.

We have also provided advice on how our residents can leave more space in their gardens for wildlife.

Leaky Homes Roadshow

We have partnered with Bucks Community Energy to create the Leaky Homes Roadshow in Chesham this winter.

In February 2022, Sustainable Chesham were successful in securing £1700 of funding, for the purchase of a Thermal Imaging Camera and to fund training and initial implementation of Community Energy surveys for householders in Chesham & surrounding villages. The scheme is planned to be rolled out starting in November when there is likely to be a significant difference between the temperatures inside and outside the properties. SC team members are currently undergoing the necessary training.

The intention is to produce a report showing where the greatest heat loss is occurring and provide further advice on what the residents can do to reduce the heat losses from their homes. We will need to charge £20 for this service.

See our partner [Bucks Community Energy's page](#) for more information. Dates have been set so to take part and have your home surveyed please click [here](#)

Community Assemblies

We believe Chesham must do more to reduce its carbon footprint, so we hold the occasional Community Assembly when we pick topics of local interest and invite as many representatives from local groups as possible to an online meeting. So far we have discussed:

- 1) How can we communicate more effectively between groups to effect change
- 2) How can we draw attention to concerns about water supply, water demand, flooding and pollution all of which affect our River Chess

We also intend to hold further meetings to discuss the following:

Reducing the dependence on cars, stopping the decline of our local wildlife, the sustainability of new development, buying food locally and cutting down on food waste.

Many of the CB members will be aware, we are already making good progress in some of these areas.

Plastic Bag Free Chesham

We have not been able to allocate suitable resources to this important matter yet, but we hope to link with other groups and explore the development of an effective strategy in the New Year.

Sustainable Chesham Stall at the Local Produce Market in Chesham

The very successful Local Produce Market draws many extra people to Chesham and we have used this monthly event as a platform to communicate to our local residents in Chesham, and the surrounding areas, finding out their sustainability concerns, and offering guidance on the activities of Sustainable Chesham.

Questions were received from the CB members relating to our tree planting project, the work of our Zone-9 cycle group and where more information can be found about the Leaky Homes Roadshow.

I am sending this report through to the Community Board for inclusion in the minutes of the October Community Board meeting.

Trevor Brawn

Sustainable Chesham: <https://sustainablechesham.org.uk>

October 2022

