



South West Chilterns Community Board minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the South West Chilterns Community Board held on Wednesday 13 July 2022 in Via MS Teams, commencing at 6.30 pm and concluding at 8.15 pm.

BC Councillors present

D Barnes (Chairman), A Collingwood, P Drayton, C Heap, N Marshall (Vice-Chairman), Z Mohammed, D Watson and S Wilson

Town/Parish Councils and other organisations present

A Bristow - Great Marlow Parish Council

Others in attendance

S Crawford (BC); M Devlin (Buckinghamshire Council (BC)); N Dicker (BC); O Elliot; A Foister; C Hawkes (BC); C Horn (Marlow Ukraine Collective (MUC); L Jeffries (BC); C Killington; A Leibowitz (MUC); J Loader (BC); D Munday (BC); A Onischen; T Orlova (Community Impact Bucks (CIB); J Sambrook; C Scott (CIB); A Taylor; J Wilson (Adult Learning) and S Xmazur

Agenda Item

1 The Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman, Councillor Dominic Barnes, welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the topic of the meeting would be around Ukraine.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman announced that Councillor Neil Marshall would continue as Vice-Chairman of the South West Chilterns Community Board for the ensuing year.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Liz Lorente, Transition Town Marlow; Geoff Pegg, Wycombe District Neighbourhood Watch Association; Councillor Richard Scott, Marlow Town Council; Councillor Mark Turner, Buckinghamshire Council (BC) and Councillor David Johncock, (BC).

Note 1: Cllr Zahir Mohammed left the meeting at 7.40 pm.

4 Declarations of interest

The Chairman declared a personal interest and stated he was the Chairman of Marlow Round Table under item 8, Marlow Ukraine Collective Update.

5 **Notes of the last meeting**

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2022 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

6 **Helping Hand for Ukraine Programme Update**

Claire Hawkes, Service Director, BC, provided a presentation, appended to the minutes, and explained that she was part of the Ukraine Response Team which involved volunteers and staff secondees who supported the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The following was a summary and more detail was available on the slides.

Claire highlighted that BC was also supporting Afghanistan refugees and was mindful that there were some Ukrainian families on the Family Scheme Visas. The South West Chilterns area had the highest number of sponsors (60) and a map showed the areas with the highest number of Ukrainian children (High Wycombe). A Local Strategic Partnership Board had been formed early in the response to collaborate with a number of organisations such as the NHS, Thames Valley Police, Business and the voluntary sector. Several teams across the Council e.g., housing, education and Adult Learning were involved in the 'whole Council' approach. Approximately 150 staff had volunteered to be a Sponsor Liaison Officer and had been paired with a sponsor for one to one contact.

It was now month four and Bucks communities had shown fantastic support and community spirit. Particular thanks went to community groups such as Marlow Ukraine Collective and others offering support networks or drop ins for guests to socialise. Overall feedback had been positive, but BC was aware that some guests were experiencing challenges, which it recognised many Bucks residents faced e.g., transport, the benefit system and available housing. These were all being fed back to government task and finish groups weekly. A Temporary Sponsorship Scheme was in place for swift emergency 're-matching' and could appeal to people – anyone interested should contact ukrainesupport@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

Claire stressed the need to put plans in place for the 'post 6 months' period and the importance of continuity being available where possible as children had settled in schools or communities. This would mean all tiers of government and the community working together to look at sustainable solutions. The project team had been extended to one year and two housing officers were being recruited as rental housing prices were high and creative solutions were required.

Nigel Dicker, Service Director for Housing, emphasised that there were 5,000 + on the housing list; it was about homelessness prevention and BC would support and respond as best they could but more help was needed from the Government.

Jacqueline Wilson, Principal, Adult Learning, provided information on the amount of English tuition which had been provided to the Ukrainian people. New venues had been set up in Lacey Green, Amersham and Beaconsfield and extra teaching staff would be recruited; classes would be offered in Marlow.

Debbie Munday, Admissions and Transport Manager, explained that the British and Ukrainian education schemes did not match and children were being put in slightly different year groups but children were grouped together where possible. The Fair Access Protocol enabled schools to go above their planned admission number; the Buckinghamshire School system had stepped up but had to treat the Ukrainian children the same as all other children, bearing in mind their circumstances.

Claire thanked everyone for their support. The following key points were raised in discussion.

- In response to being asked what advice should be given to new arrivals regarding schooling; Debbie advised it was not possible to guarantee a place for the start of term in September but stressed that the team would do the best they could. It was emphasised that this would also be an issue for any parent moving into the area. Head teachers could be contacted in an emergency but Debbie would need to ascertain if they were prepared to be contacted during the summer holidays.

Action: D Munday

- Any Ukrainian families who moved area would need to follow the same process as all other children to obtain a school place.
- Further work would be undertaken in collaboration with community groups to understand key needs going forwards, housing concerns and progress escalations.

Action: C Hawkes

The Chairman thanked Claire, Nigel, Jackie and Debbie for attending.

7 Representing a Hosting Family

Councillor Stuart Wilson introduced himself as a host and provided a presentation, appended to the minutes. Cllr Wilson stated he lived in Bourne End with access to public transport and had been hosting a family since 5th May 2022. The family consisted of the grandmother, mother and two daughters; the father was serving in the military in Ukraine. Only one family member spoke good English. Cllr Wilson advised that the Marlow Ukraine Collective had been really helpful; he had also had a small amount of interaction with BC and government departments. His observation from a host's point of view, was that the experience was humbling and gratifying, and one that he would repeat. His guests' desire to contribute to his household, society and work was phenomenal and they would be a new extended family for life. The Language apps had been a life saver, along with bus passes. Cllr Wilson felt he had provided support as a taxi service, financial consultant, employment consultant etc. What happened next was the big question. Marlow Ukraine Collective had been a pioneer and Cllr Wilson thanked them for their invaluable assistance.

The following key points were raised in discussion.

- Cllr Wilson was asked what he was expecting to happen next. Cllr Wilson advised that the Government FAQs stated that sponsors should give two

months' notice to BC if they intended to cease being part of the scheme. For those coming up to the cut off time, there were many issues associated with housing, moving schools, etc. which needed resolving and further information would be useful.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Wilson for being a sponsor and his presentation.

8 Marlow Ukraine Collective Update

Chris Horn and Ali Leibowitz, Marlow Ukraine Collective (MUC), provided a presentation, appended to the minutes. The MUC had been a success due to knowing what people needed and because other people had wanted to deliver. The [website](#) had been a great source of information. A number of Ukrainians had secured jobs; however, Ukrainians being hosted in Frieth were required to attend Reading Job Centre which was not an easy journey and hosts were constantly spinning plates to try to relieve the stress for the Ukrainians.

An event was held to welcome Ukrainian families to Marlow on 18 June 2022; positive feedback was received and Chris thanked Amanda Foister for donating Longridge for the day. The Rotary Club and Marlow Round Table also wanted to continue to help.

Ali highlighted the three big needs: clarity on school places/school transport, English lessons and what happened after six months. Ali emphasised that if the structures were improved, the hosts would be more likely to endure the situation. Unfortunately, there were no summer camps in place for children aged 14+. The South West Chilterns area had the biggest number of refugees but there was a lack of language provision and Ali had not heard about the four week summer school until this meeting. Transparency was required on how the funding process worked.

Chris thanked the SWC CB for listening and stated he would appreciate deeper conversations with other organisations. Chris recommended visiting the [website](#) for further information.

The Chairman advised that he was the local councillor for Frieth and was surprised that he not been informed that there were 50 guests in Frieth. The Chairman emphasised that there were three local councillors for the area and they were willing to help but stressed that they could not leap frog the system. The Chairman also confirmed that the councillors did receive briefings on the Scheme and it was explained that they were not provided specific information due to General Data Protection Regulations. Cllr Wilson confirmed that he had raised issues to Claire from a councillor and host perspective.

The Chairman thanked Chris and Ali for their presentation.

9 Buckinghamshire Ukraine Community Support Project

Tania Orlova and Cheryl Scott provided a presentation, appended to the minutes. Tania described herself as a 'bridge between two worlds', she was a refugee with an

eight year old son and was participating in many events and knew about what was being carried out in the communities. Tania had had to move eight times and was now looking for a new place to live as she needed to be independent. Sponsors were using their free time to help the Ukrainians and communities were helping each other. Community Impact Bucks (CIB) understood the top three problems – language, employment and housing and the [website](#) included information on how to find a volunteer and how the service worked.

Cheryl explained that there was also a Volunteer Interpreter Service with interpreters available for a community service (not to visit the Department for Work and Pensions). A form was available on the website to request an interpreter.

The Chairman thanked Tania and Cheryl for their presentation.

10 The Good Sides and Bad Sides of the Ukrainian Scheme

Sofia Xmazur presented the item and provided a presentation on behalf of Oksana Oganezov. Oksana had asked for feedback on the Ukrainian Scheme and the three main issues were education for teenagers aged 15+, Job Centre check-ins and free in-person English classes.

The Ukraine school system finished at age 17 but there was no information available on the difference between the UK and Ukrainian school systems and what was available.

Job Centre check-ins – Ukrainians received a £200 monthly payment but spent approximately £100 on a taxi for their weekly check-in at the job centre. There were communication difficulties at the job centre and it would be better for the Ukrainians to learn basic English before attending the job centre.

English classes with Ukrainian born tutors would be beneficial. Some Ukrainians did not possess the technical skills or equipment to use online resources. However, there was positive feedback on the sponsors, social support and kindergarten schools.

Sofia thanked everyone for the work being carried out. The Chairman thanked Sofia for her presentation.

11 Community Matters

Buckinghamshire Council Update

Lloyd Jeffries ran through the BC update, appended to the minutes, and highlighted the following:

- The Helping Hand Scheme - support was available for those on a low income.
- Waste and recycling missed bins – apologies had been issued from the Council due to the recent bin collection problems. A ‘lessons learned’ document had been produced and would be circulated to the board members.

Action: L Jeffries/M Devlin

- Garden Waste Charges – The new waste subscription arrangements had been moved back and would commence on Monday 26 September 2022; there would be an ‘opt-in’ garden waste service charge of £50 per bin per year.
- The Community Boards would have a stall at the County Show on 1 September 2022 at Weedon Park, near Aylesbury.
- Council Tax Energy Rebate – over 80% of the £150 rebates had been paid. There was also an additional discretionary £25 Helping Hand top-up for those on specific benefits.

South West Chilterns Community Board Funding for 2022/23

The Chairman advised that the budget for 2022/23 was £122,528 and explained that there were the following action groups which were open to anyone and new participants would be very welcome (contact Makyla Devlin, Senior Community Board Manager - swccb@buckinghamshire.gov.uk):

- Transport and Highways
- Economic Recovery and Development
- Environment and Climate Change
- Community Engagement

Small grants funding had now been released for funding up to £1,000 and information was available on the [South West Chilterns Community Board](#) page of the BC website.

Makyla added that information was expected imminently regarding the process for transport related projects and would be forwarded to the Transport and Highways Action Group.

12 Date of the next meetings

Wednesday 16 November 2022 at 1830 and 8 February 2023 at 1830.