



North West Chilterns Community Board minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the North West Chilterns Community Board held on Thursday 23 November 2023 in The Princes Centre, Clifford Road, Princes Risborough, HP27 ODP, commencing at 6.30 pm.

BC Councillors present

M Walsh (Chairman), C Etholen (Vice-Chairman), S Broadbent, D Carroll, G Hall, C Harriss and A Turner

Town/Parish Councils and other organisations present

Cllr S Breese, Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council; Cllr C Davies, Lacey Green Parish Council; Cllr V McPherson and Cllr J Rogers, Longwick-cum-Ilmer Parish Council; Cllr S Cope, West Wycombe Parish Council; G Smith, MP; J Stevens, Lead of the Transport and Road Issues Action Group; N Marriner, Chilterns Conservation Board; P Spence, Hughenden Valley Residents Association and J Binning, M Devlin, W Morgan-Brown, P Thomas and S Payne (Buckinghamshire Council).

Agenda Item

1 Chairman's Welcome

A warm welcome was given by the Chair - Matthew Walsh (MW).

The Community Board remembered Councillor Ron Gaffney who was a resident of Saunderton and attended our Transport and Road Issues Action Group. A moments silence was given in his memory.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Buckinghamshire Council Councillors Arif Hussain, Melanie Smith, Paul Turner, Darren Hayday, Orsolya Hayday and Shade Adoh; Councillor Helen Holman, Ellesborough Parish Council; Councillor Stan Jones, Hughenden Parish Council; Giles Tandy, Parish Clerk for Downley Parish Council; and Nicola Surman, Funding and Support Manager.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Notes of the last meeting

Jackie Binning (JB) confirmed the progress made on all actions raised from the meetings held on 27th July 2023, 7th September 2023 and 14th September 2023:

27th July 2023

NWC Active Travel Aspirations Document: Sophie Payne (SP) asked if reductions in traffic flow or what people could do as a result of some of the proposals included in this document, so for example, children travelling to school safely and active travel routes to school. SP asked if these existed in the document. Although these did exist, Jim Stevens make it clearer.

A separate meeting was requested to take a formal vote on the NWC Active Travel Aspirations Document. This was carried out on 14th September.

14th September 2023 – Meeting to review the NWC Travel Aspirations Document:

It was requested that Section 7 be amended as it was felt that concerns should be referenced when issues were raised, instead of suggesting a different policy should be in place. The document was re-worded.

The NWC Active Travel Aspirations Document was approved during the meeting. Since the meeting, the approved document has been sent to the Transport Strategy Team and to the Community Board for information purposes.

7th September – Meeting to review e-Petitions

e-Petition, Traffic Calming in Lacey Green:

Lacey Green Parish Council - recommendations progressing well.

e-Petition, Radnage School Safety:

Radnage Parish Council – a review of the recommendations started earlier this week (w/c 20.11.23).

e-Petition, Bledlow Ridge Traffic Calming:

Bledlow cum Saunderton Parish Council: As agreed during the meeting, Stephen Reading requested a site visit from Buckinghamshire Highways. To date, this has not been arranged so Robert Carington (RC) is following up.

The minutes of the meetings dated 27th July 2023, 7th September 2023 and 14th September 2023 were approved by the NWC Community Board.

Action: RC/JB: Site visit to be arranged for Bledlow Ridge e-Petition (carried forward from meeting on 7th September).

5 e-Petition - School Bus for Lord Williams School, Thame

Neil Beswick (NB), Head of Client Transport, Buckinghamshire Council, referred to the petition report included in the Agenda pack.

A petition was submitted by the parents of students from the Princes Risborough area attending Lord Williams School in Thame.

The petition requested that the council arrange transport for students to school

after the withdrawal of a commercially operated local bus service that students previously travelled on. This service was partially funded by Oxfordshire County Council to Lord Williams School.

The students concerned are not eligible for council funded transport as described under Buckinghamshire Council's [Home to School Transport Policy](#) as they are not attending their nearest suitable school.

However, in early October 2023, Oxfordshire County Council informed the Buckinghamshire Council (BC) that the transport operator who had originally won their tender had decided that they didn't wish to continue after the half term break, and the contract would be awarded to Redline, the previous operator who had provided the commercial extension of the route from Princes Risborough.

Question: A parent asked for clarification in that BC had managed to get an extension for the same group of children within this area to board on the existing route. NB said that the operator who had taken up the contract had now reinstated what was previously there because BC made them aware of the interest and that this was a commercial opportunity for them.

Residents believed this was not correct because the previous solution that was in place was that there were several buses which collected the children from Chinnor, they come through the Aylesbury area, onto Princes Risborough, through Longwick and then go to Chinnor to pick up those children. This was the bus route that local children boarded. This was not the service that was working now. Currently, there was a single bus for the local children alone and residents wanted to talk about that because there was a concern over sustainability from an environment point of view and funding. This was the third time this situation had happened where the bus had been terminated, so assurances were required that this would not happen again. There was added stress not knowing if the service would continue and how their children would get to Lord Williams. It was felt that all pupils should be treated as eligible and considered as important. If there was transport in Longwick it would not be an issue.

Question: Are there any regulations to put a cap on the cost of school transport as the operator increased the cost to another £100 per term. Parents were being charged £1,000 per year, but parents were technically paying more because the service started mid half term and was £200 to £300 more than other routes when their route was the shortest. Parents understood that it came down to commercial viability but would like BC to review this.

Answer: NB advised that he was aware that for routes in the South of County, parents were paying £1,400 per annum. Operators were struggling with a shortage of bus drivers and fuel costs had gone up, so BC try to assist in placing eligible students on the bus, but where there's a commercial offer, the operator will set his own price.

Question: This was understood by parents but they wondered if there were other options where other buses could divert, just in case there were any future problems with Redline. The service was working well at the moment, but were there other options where other buses could divert, as parents were concerned that the service would be pulled again and parents would find themselves in the same position again.

Answer: NB advised that BC liaised with Redline buses on a regular basis and had a working relationship with them. He would know if and when any problems arose.

Question: Why is there not a bus route from Risborough to Thame? Why is there nothing that comes through Longwick?

Answer: MW confirmed that he spoken to James Loader. He also said that Longwick had received half a million due to housing re-development, but in bus terms, this was not alot of money. There was an agreement that there would be a meeting between the three Ward Members (MW, Gary Hall and Alan Turner), James and NB to see if other schemes could be enhanced. MW thanked NB for his involvement in helping to resolve this, and thought a good job had been done by the parents and the action group in making sure something happened. MW acknowledged that parents needed to be reassured that they would not find themselves in this situation in the future. This petition had highlighted the difficulties being experienced and MW said we would work together to look at solutions/options. **Action: MW:** To review future bus options and solutions.

Jim Stevens introduced himself as the Chair for the Transport and Road Issues Action Group. JS advised that the group empathised with the issues raised in the petition and said that he also spoke to NB about it. He also appreciated that further concerns had been raised and that these would be reviewed by Ward Members and others. He also thanked NB for adhering to the Home to School Transport Policy, and more importantly, went over and above to look at a way forward, which didn't undermine this policy, but tried to achieve something for residents which he succeeded in doing.

6 Action Groups

See reports detailed in the Agenda Pack.

MW stated that he and CE met with the Action Group Chairs on a regular basis and said there had been some great work. The Community Resilience Action Group were working well on the Community Garden at Orchard View Farm, the Economic Regeneration & Development group were organising a Business Network event at Orchard View Farm in conjunction with BC's Film Office and Economic Development team. MW confirmed that he would be at Pinewood Studios tomorrow with Greg Smith to try and lobby them to use the excellent outdoor space in the North West Chilterns. MW added that the action groups were not replicated across all Community Boards and we were one of the few to have so many. He believed the groups were doing sterling work. There were no matters arising.

7 Energy Doctor Service

Paul Thomas (PT), Domestic Resource Efficiency Officer, Buckinghamshire Council provided an overview of the Energy Doctor Service, it's aims and the qualifying criteria for an Energy Doctor visit. The presentation is appended to the minutes.

Question: How long is the scheme in place for? PT confirmed that it would be fund for 18 months or until the funds had exhausted. This was open to all residents in Buckinghamshire and could include areas outside of Opportunity Bucks, but there was a focus to assist in those areas. MW confirmed that Opportunity Bucks areas were High Wycombe, Aylesbury and Chesham. PT added that in Princes Risborough he recently visited the Arms Houses in the Retreat and that the visit was well received.

Question: Solar panels.

i) Can they be installed in the back garden?

Answer: Yes - they require some maintenance and need to be angled properly and moved around to follow the sun.

ii) Are the solar panels carbon neutral?

Answer: Yes as producing energy from the sun. Panels can be charged from your vehicle via a 12v socket, but this could affect your floor consumption.

iii) What are the costs for the panels?

Answer: The Council secured a number of units at a good price, but the cost was approximately £200.

Question: Simon Breese (SB) asked if PT was in contact with Bledlow Consolidated Charities. PT said no so SB agreed to put him touch.

Question: Is this scheme about batch cooking and the sensible use of appliances in terms of saving money?

Answer: It was difficult to give advice on this as the service may not extend to all appliances, but if something was clearly not correct, some guidance would be given. Sophie Payne stated there was alot of work being done, with many courses being developed in the Opportunity Bucks areas in particular, with cookery courses, budgeting in terms of food, and there were good networks in operation with food banks and other community organisations etc. This however was open to those outside of Opportunity Bucks. MW thought a comms piece from our Corporate team would be helpful because these services were available to all - if someone met the criteria, help was at hand for residents in the North West Chilterns.

Question: Is it better to fill the kettle up and fill a flask or just boil what you need at a time?

Answer: Only fill the kettle with the water you need, and if you choose to put it in a flask, then that it is down to the individual.

8 Hedgerow Project

Nick Marriner (NM), Chiltern Conservation Board (CCB) provided a presentation –

appended to the minutes.

The key highlights from the presentation were as follows:

- NM thanked the Community Board for their support given to the project.
- The CCB were four years into a five year Lottery Heritage supported project.
- CCB had worked with local farms across the area and had identified how to support them with wildlife, plants and trees.
- More habitat and bigger habitat needed to make the connections between habitats and create islands for birds and butterflies.
- Farmland is the connecting piece between woodland and grass areas. A great deal of work had taken place to build up relationships with the farmers.
- There were 18 farms in the cluster.
- Advice had been given to farmers on how to improve their land to encourage the habitats.
- Hedgerows were a key point and this was the project supported by the Community Board.
- Approximately 25km of hedgerow had been created. A combination of planting, coppicing and fencing.
- There were three local farms in the North West Chilterns - Little Horsenden, Old Callowdown and Beachdown Farm had benefitted from this project.
- Hedgerows were a successful way of capturing carbon.
- Callowdown Farm – Lodge Hill, a triple SI (Sites of Special, Scientific Interest). CCB worked with farmers in clearing the scrubland. This took approximately eight weeks to achieve a manageable state. Cattle grazing back on site to keep the scrubland under control. Site had been monitored for four years and CCB were now starting to see the ground improve and wild flowers growing. This was part of a 20 year project. Every area of the farm had improved it's connectivity.
- Had been working with other organisations such as Chiltern Rangers, providing opportunities for volunteers to work on local projects aiding mental health.
- Worked with the Rothchilds Foundation on a project to help each farm to understand their carbon footprint.
- Survey work – approximately 250 volunteers had been trained to carry out volunteer wildlife surveys. Areas had been broken down into squares and each volunteer looked at species of plants and wildlife. This was carried out over a period of time to track changes.
- New Shoots was a group of young volunteers between 15 to 18 years of age, who were encouraged into conservation and carrying out basic surveys.

Question: Looking to the next five to 10 years, how integrated is the CCB with the SFI (Sustainable Farming Interest) to work directly with the farmers to help them plan?

Answer: Advice is given to turn farmers into studious SFI's. Providing the evidence to the farmers proves that there is success through the Cluster group. An application

had been submitted for landscape recovery, working across landowners which would allow a foundation to build on.

Question: Lodge Hill prevented a woodland from developing to allow cows to graze. Are woodlands a good thing?

Answer: Woodlands are great in the right place. From a biodiversity perspective it was good to have a mixed habitat. A scrubby edge and combined environment was good, not a mono culture.

9 Funding Update

Jackie Binning (JB), Community Board Manager asked that, in addition to the information presented, if anyone knew of any project ideas, they should contact her. There were many pre-application conversations being had and were highlighted on the slides. Presentation appended to the minutes.

Comment: Thank you from the Village Hall in Hughenden Valley for the new car park surface.

Question: Whiteleaf Cross – this was looking green and tired and the car park was pot holed. It was believed that the Chiltern Society were looking at renovating the cross and the car park and would still like to look at this project.

Answer: JB confirmed that two meetings had taken place this year with the Chiltern Society. They had however decided to put an application in during the next budget year.

10 Community Matters

Sophie Payne – Service Director, Culture, Sport and Leisure provided the meeting with the Corporate update. See the Corporate Update included in the Agenda pack.

11 Date of the next meeting

22 February 2024 – Church Hall, St Michael and All Angels, Hughenden, HP14 4LA