

**ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**RURAL AREA WORKING PARTY**

**Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 10 March 2011 at 5.00 pm  
in Room GFR14, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor J Thorndyke (Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Bone, Mrs Broughton, Clifton-Brown (substituting for Spicer) Mrs Levack, Redhead, Stevens and Mrs D A Whittaker.

BY INVITATION: Councillor Aitkens

**46. Substitutions**

The following substitution was declared:-

Councillor Clifton-Brown for Councillor Spicer.

**47. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chappell, Ray and Spicer.

**48. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman reported that he had received an estimate of £650 from the 'Wos Up' Outreach Project to visit Stanton for 12 sessions.

**49. Declarations of Interests**

Members' declarations of interests are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

**50. Petition: Reinstatement of some form of regular public transport through the villages of Stansfield and Poslingford**

The Working Party received a petition containing over 110 signatures which called upon the Borough Council for support against the sudden cancellation of the daily bus service through Stansfield and Poslingford.

Mrs Lakey, a representative of the petitioners, addressed the Working Party and highlighted the problems now being encountered, particularly by the elderly and by the young. She stated that the recent cancellation of the buses had a devastating effect on the elderly residents of both villages, making them reliant on friends and relations for shopping and outings or in the worst cases making them prisoners in their own homes. This was equally true for anyone facing mobility issues. For the young people the end of the bus service had an equally isolating effect. Young people used the bus service to travel to college, look for work, travel to work and engage in positive pursuits in their spare time. She considered that the disadvantages fell unfairly and most heavily on those who were on low incomes and already facing multiple problems.

Mrs Lakey was made aware that rural bus services were not a responsibility of the Borough Council but were a County Council function. However, it was noted that the Rural Action Plan number 33, '*support initiatives that promote community self help and reduce isolation*' meant that the Working Party could consider this issue.

The Working Party recognised the problems highlighted and various potential solutions were considered. However, it was concluded that as well as passing on the petition to the County Council Portfolio Holder the Working Party should try and initiate a meeting between representatives of bus operators, Suffolk County Council and the Borough Council in order to see if there were any possible solutions.

*(Councillors Mrs Bone and Mrs D A Whittaker arrived during the consideration of this item)*

## **51. Rural Action Plan 2011 to 2014: Final Document**

The Working Party considered Report B499 (previously circulated) which sought approval for the Rural Action Plan for 2011 to 2014.

On 1 December 2010 the Cabinet agreed to extend the Rural Action Plan for a further three years to cover the period April 2011 to March 2014 (Minute 87 (D) (1) referred). The first phase of consultation, asking members of the public for project ideas, was carried out in December 2010 and following analysis of the responses received, a draft Action Plan was presented to the Working Party on 13 January 2011. At this meeting the draft Rural Action Plan was approved to go out to consultation, which took place from 14 January to 28 February 2011. The responses from this phase of the consultation had been analysed and a final Rural Action Plan had been produced and was attached as Appendix A to the report. A paper was tabled which listed the number of consultation responses received, analysed over the parishes, and these totalled 53. The paper also detailed the responses relating to the individual topics contained within the draft Rural Action Plan, analysed between 'keep'; 'remove'; 'no preference'.

The Working Party noted that despite 21 people wanting to remove the Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project it was being recommended that this project remain within the Action Plan because all the respondents that voted to remove it were from villages that had not received visits from the caravan. It was also noted that during 2011 to 2014 the Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project intended to widen its coverage. As a result of the consultation it was proposed that some of the projects listed be merged and that the project regarding '*encourage villages to make the most of the 2012 Olympic opportunity*' be removed and, therefore, this meant that the total number of projects on the draft Action Plan had been reduced from 45 to 37.

Some concern was expressed that the Action Plan still contained a considerable number of items and it was questioned whether this should be further reduced. However, the Working Party was informed that the Action Plan covered a three year period and based on the experience of the current Action Plan and using the monitoring procedures and reports to the Working Party, the actions within the new Action Plan should be achievable.

A discussion was held on a number of topics contained within the Action Plan, including that relating to warmer greener homes. The Working Party recognised that there appeared to be inequality whereby information and grants were available for cavity wall insulation but not for lining solid walls. It was considered appropriate that the Environmental Management Officer be asked to provide information in the Members' Bulletin about the availability of advice and grant funding for insulation of solid wall properties and how Councillors might be involved in promoting this.

A discussion was also held concerning the detailed responses to the consultation and using this as a scoring mechanism to prioritise the projects within the Action Plan.

RESOLVED:-

That the Environmental Management Officer provide information in the Members' Bulletin concerning the availability of advice and grant funding for insulation for solid wall properties and how Councillors might be able to assist in promoting this.



**RECOMMENDED:- That**

- (1) the Rural Action Plan for 2011 to 2014, attached as Appendix A to Report B499, be approved; and**
- (2) the Corporate Director for Community Services, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Rural Area Working Party, be authorised to make any necessary minor amendments to the final document prior to publication.**

## **52. Rural Vision 2031**

The Working Party received an oral update from Ian Poole, a Joint Acting Head of Planning and Economic Development, on the launch of the Rural Vision 2031.

Ian Poole informed the Working Party that there were three main stages in preparing the new Vision:-

- Stage 1: from March to June 2011, Issues and Visioning;
- Stage 2: Autumn 2011, draft Vision; and
- Stage 3: Spring 2012, final Vision.

It was the intention that consultation events would be held in key and local service centres. The key service centre events would take place first, and were scheduled for March 2011 and the local service centre drop-in events scheduled for May 2011. During Stage 1, the Council was inviting the public to tell the Council what they thought on current and future issues that their village faced and what was their vision for the area in 2031. He emphasised that the Vision was more than just a matter of housing related matters but more of a whole community outlook.

Some concern was expressed at the venues being used to hold the drop-in events and it was suggested that the Rural Coffee Caravan could be used.

A general discussion was held on the publicity surrounding the drop-in events and using different forms of advertising and the location of the publicity material. In addition, consideration was given for the Council to attend various major events within the area, such as the South Suffolk Show and the weekly markets. It was agreed that suggestions would be forwarded to Ian Poole.

## **53. Waste and Street Scene Services Cleansing Services**

The Working Party received and noted a presentation from the Head of Waste, Street Scene Services and Projects and Waste Development Officer concerning the Parish and Town Council consultation in respect of the cleansing review.

The consultation on the cleansing review was based on four main themes of street cleansing; channel sweeping; dog litter bins; and strategy and policy. The consultation asked for suggestions and comments to be taken into account in the current cleansing review. Requests for comments were sent to all Parish and Town Councils in West Suffolk and the consultation period commenced on 10 December 2010 and finished on 11 February 2011. 39 responses had been received from 36 Councils, which represented a 40% response rate. The responses to the consultation were as follows:-

- (1) 90% of respondents considered that they were satisfied or better with the current level of service provided;
- (2) 57% of respondents confirmed that the Council was cleansing the right areas at the right times;
- (3) only 10% of respondents considered that some areas could do with less cleansing to allow others to be cleansed more often;
- (4) 62% of respondents considered that dog and litter bins were in the right places and of the right quantity; and
- (5) 55% of respondents considered that the community could become more involved in cleansing, given the right support and equipment.

The Working Party was informed that:-

- (1) suggestions with regard to frequency to both road sweepings and litter crews would be taken into consideration;
- (2) suggestions for future litter bin types would also be taken into consideration;
- (3) specific areas identified as a problem, for example the incorrect placement of dog and/or litter bins, would be investigated; and
- (4) all respondents would be updated with any decisions made and changes to cleansing policies.

In response to a question the Working Party was informed that it was the Borough Council's responsibility to sweep roads where there was a kerb line and the County Council's where there was not.

The waste partnership with Forest Heath District Council would purchase a large rural sweeping vehicle that would be used in both local authority areas. It was estimated that it would take this vehicle approximately 10 weeks to complete a full cleansing cycle.

The Working Party then held a discussion on how many villages undertook cleansing duties themselves. It was considered important that the Borough Council gave more publicity into making Parish/Town Council aware that a stock of equipment was held for them to use.

Some concern was expressed that the closure of the waste disposal sites at Ingham and Newmarket could create problems with fly tipping. This situation would be monitored.

#### **54. Rural Area Working Party Programme**

The Working Party received and noted Report B500 (previously circulated) which set out the Working Party's Work Programme to the end of 2011.

Arising from the earlier consideration of the petition in respect of rural bus services (minute 50 above), the Working Party felt it would be appropriate to invite the County Council, bus operators and other stakeholders to its June 2011 meeting, with the emphasis being on identifying practical solutions.

Councillor Mrs Whittaker raised the issue of post offices no longer being able to cash benefit cheques, and the potential impact of this in rural communities. The officers agreed to examine this matter and advise Members either before or at the next meeting. The Working Party was also asked to promote the 2011 Village of the Year Competition, which this year was for villages with up to 500 electors.

#### **55. Dates of Future Meetings**

The Working Party confirmed the following dates for future meetings in 2011/2012:-

15 June 2011;  
12 September 2011;  
9 November 2011;  
17 January 2012; and  
14 March 2012.

All meetings to commence at 5.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 6.33 pm.

**CHAIRMAN**