

GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19TH JANUARY 2010

Councillors: Emma Webster (*Chairman*) (P), Peter Argyle (P), Howard Bairstow (P), Lee Dillon (AP), Tim Metcalfe (P), Tony Vickers (*Vice-Chairman*) (P),

Substitutes: Paul Bryant (For agenda item 5) (P), Manohar Gopal, Owen Jeffery, Terry Port.

Also present: Councillor Graham Pask (*Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, "Cleaner Greener" and Safer Stronger Communities*) (P), Jeff Beck (Stronger Communities Select Committee Member) (P), David Holtby (Stronger Communities Select Committee Member) (P), Mollie Lock (Stronger Communities Select Committee Member) (P), Alan Macro (Stronger Communities Select Committee Member) (P), Kelvin Hughes (Chief Executive Newbury Community Resource Centre), John Ashworth (Corporate Director Environment), Bryan Lytle (Planning and Transport Services Manager), Mike Trevallion (Transport Services Manager), Matthew Metcalfe (Senior Transport Services Officer) and David Cook (Principal Policy Officer).

PART I

9. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for the inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillor Lee Dillon.

10. MINUTES.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2009 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest received.

12. USE OF LOCAL RESOURCES – LOCAL FOOD.

The Committee considered a presentation (Agenda Item 4) concerning the work of the West Berkshire Partnership's Greener Partnership in relation to their work promoting local food. The presentation formed part of the evidence base for the Greener Select Committee's review of the use of local resources.

Kelvin Hughes, Chief Executive Newbury Community Resource Centre, informed Members that the West Berkshire Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP) Greener sub-partnership had been tasked within The Sustainable Community Strategy (A Breath of Fresh Air) with a priority outcome to have five percent of all the food consumed within West Berkshire grown within the district.

Members were informed that in order to reach the five percent target by 2026 the current levels of production and consumption needed to be established. The methodology for establishing this baseline figure needed to be able to be replicated in future years without costly specialist input. Reading University were able to undertake this piece of work at a cost of £10,000. The Atomic Weapons Establishment had promised £2,500 towards the cost; however the remaining £7,500 had not been found. Once this funding had been secured and the research

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undertaken, additional funding would be sought to hold a conference to promote the results and bring together interested parties to formulate a plan to meet the 2026 target.

In order to meet the LSP target four actions had been established; secure funding from the National Lottery, establish the baseline figure, enlist the support of three organisations as local 'champions' and deliver a publicity campaign to promote the purchase of local produce. Funding had been secured for the last two objectives; however this could not be used for establishing the baseline figure.

The Growing Together Project, Elm Farm Organic Research Centre and the Hungerford Environmental Action Team had volunteered to be the local 'champions' and work together to publicise and market local food. Additional groups were being sought to include farmers markets, allotment organisations and larger commercial enterprises.

To help promote the work being undertaken it was proposed to prepare leaflets and have press releases to launch the project, to develop a website detailing local opportunities, develop links with a local chef to promote the use of local food, hold open days, run cookery workshops and produce a video for community groups.

Members were informed that in June 2009 funding had been secured for the Growing2Gether project. The project, based at Cottismore Park, would create and sustain a community food growing and training centre. The project would provide opportunities for members of the local community and in particular those with learning difficulties or at social disadvantage to participate in growing food. It was anticipated that over the first three years of the project around one thousand people would benefit directly. This would include six newly created posts, eight temporary posts for young people under the Governments Future Jobs Fund, 90 new volunteers and one hundred and forty existing volunteers, sixty trainees, ninety representatives from other organisations, twenty local residents would have plots on site and six hundred households were expected to participate in the promotion and awareness of the links between food and healthy lifestyles.

Members were also informed of other activities being undertaken including Sovereign Housing opening new allotments in Hungerford, the formation of the East Garston Allotment Association and seventeen working allotments now in place in East Ilsley.

Kelvin Hughes reported that whilst undertaking the work for the LSP there appeared to be a demand for access to opportunities for people to grow their own food, there were a growing number of successful initiatives being undertaken to provide land for the local community to grow their own food and within West Berkshire there was a wealth of skills to support future projects. Members were also informed that these positives were offset by the difficulties in finding funding for the baseline study, there was no overall picture for the provision of allotments for the district, more groups were needed to be 'champions' for projects, the focus was on community based projects and not agricultural businesses and the current plan did not give enough focus on marketing existing goods produced locally.

In response to the presentation Members raised the following points:

- As a community leader West Berkshire Council should help to support the partnership in meeting its targets.

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- More food produced locally would help reduce the number and length of journeys delivering and collecting food. Reducing these 'food miles' would be beneficial to the environment.
- Greater publicity was required to attract funding and Members agreed to contact Kelvin Hughes if they were aware of any funding streams.
- Newbury Town Council, via the Sustainable Newbury Initiative, was looking at schemes for communities to grow their own food.
- West Berkshire produced agricultural produce but there were no facilities, such as dairies, to process the food. A large percentage of local food travelled outside the district to get processed and packaged and returned to our supermarkets. People needed to be aware what 'local' means when buying produce.
- More needed to be done to allow 'hobby' farming to grow and become local businesses and the public needed to be educated on where their food came from.
- Work could be done to look at the size of allotments being used as traditionally they were introduced to help support a family of four. As the main source of our food no longer came from allotments smaller patches could be introduced to encourage more people to cultivate them.
- Apart from the benefits of producing their own food there were also associated health benefits for those who work an allotment.

The Chairman thanked Kelvin Hughes and the volunteers who worked with him for all the effort they were putting in to help encourage more people to produce and purchase local produce.

As part of their review into the use of local resources the committee asked if representatives from Elm Farm and local farming markets could be invited to the next meeting of the Greener Select Committee.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

13. REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

The Committee considered a report (agenda Item 5) concerning a joint review by Members of the Greener Select Committee and Members of the Stronger Communities Select Committee into the use of public transport.

The Chairman informed Members that the rationale behind the review was to understand the scope of transport within West Berkshire, to promote social inclusion and community cohesion and promote the use of public transport. Members were informed that a task group would consider whether the demand for public transport was being met, the obstacles to the use of public transport, consider what was being done to further improve the use of public transport and to recommend to the Council's Executive any changes to current arrangements.

Bryan Lytle (Planning and Transport Services Manager), Mike Trevallion (Transport Services Manager) and Matthew Metcalfe (Senior Transport Services Officer) attended the meeting to help inform the review.

Members were informed that there were forty one separate bus services operating within West Berkshire of which four were commercial services, of these four all operating cross boundary. Seventeen services were fully subsidised by West

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Berkshire Council, ten were partially subsidised by West Berkshire Council, and ten were wholly subsidised by other organisations. There were sixteen different bus operators providing these services. Excluding the budget for home to school transport the Council still spent over £1.3 million on subsidising buses. Bus companies within the district needed high levels of subsidy due to the high levels of car ownership, the district was relatively wealthy and thus people were less likely to use public transport and the rural nature of the district resulted in un-profitable routes.

In response to the presentation Members raised the following points:

- In response to questions regarding the national free bus travel pass Members were informed that prior to the scheme bus companies would receive cash payment for journeys, however due to the scheme they had to claim for re-imburement and only received up to fifty percent of the fare.
- Concern was raised about the lack of information regarding changes to bus timetables and routes and that this discouraged people from using public transport. In response officers informed Members that Newbury Buses (Reading Buses) provided information regarding timetables on their website. With any form of public transport the public had to be prepared to look for information about services. West Berkshire Council also published leaflets on bus services.
- Consideration should be given to promoting mixed mode transport. Members were given an example of how in other countries devices were attached to the back of buses to allow bicycles to be carried.
- The Local Access Forum should be added to the list of witnesses.
- There were a number of dial-a-bus services run in the district, however they would never be self funding.
- Members should look at accessibility issues to train stations within the district.
- If local train services were not improved then it should be listed in the Council's Local Transport Plan Three as a threat to service delivery.
- Southwest Trains should be changed to Great Western Trains on the list of witnesses.

RESOLVED that the Public Transport Task Group undertake its review and report its findings to the Council's Executive.

14. **GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME.**

The Committee considered a report (agenda Item 6) concerning its future work programme.

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the Select Committee would consider waste and continue their review into the use of local resources. That the Rights of Way Improvement Plan be considered in October 2010.

(The meeting commenced at 6:30pm and closed at 8:45pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature: