

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY GROUP OPEN FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, 21 MAY 2024**

Councillors Present: Stuart Gourley (Chairman), Carlyne Culver, Owen Jeffery and Martha Vickers

Also Present: Jon Winstanley (Service Director (Environment)) and Kofi Adu-Gyamfi (Service Lead - Climate Change),

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Nick Carter

PART I

1 Election of a Chairman for the 2024-25 Municipal Year

Councillor Stuart Gourley was elected as Chairman for the 2024-25 Municipal Year.

2 Apologies

Councillor Nick Carter sent his apologies with Councillor Owen Jeffery as Substitute.

3 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of interest were received.

4 Minutes of the Previous EAG Open Forum 25 March 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

**5 Motion: Bond Riverside Culvert (Submitted by Councillor Abbs):
Councillor Abbs and Jon Winstanley - West Berkshire Council**

Councillor Abbs gave a presentation on his motion on the Bond Riverside Culvert:

- The motion was brought forward to help the administration start a dialogue with relevant parties, and to avoid additional costs and delays of being taken to court.
- With dialogue, there would be a better chance to avoid complications.
- The findings from the LRIE Scrutiny Commission found contract control had been inadequate.
- Sustainable drainage legislation was increasingly complex and required to be dealt with on site.
- Dredging the culvert had no effect due to the water table.
- There had been a cumulative effect up stream since the Culvert was created from developments.
- A Critical Path Committee made up of key stakeholders with a focus on drainage issues with the Culvert should be created.
- The Critical Path Committee would report back to the Council on findings associated with ideas and plans coming from the administration.

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The Chairman stated that the motion called upon the Executive to take relevant actions. It could not be debated at Full Council, and it had been brought to the Environmental Advisory Group (EAG) because it was related to flooding and responsibility for flooding matters had moved to the Executive Portfolio holder for Environment and Highways. The Chairman welcomed the opportunity for the motion to be discussed at EAG.

Jon Winstanley clarified that:

- The oversight responsibility for the Northcroft ditch did not lie with the Environment Agency (EA), it sat with West Berkshire Council (the Council), which was the Lead Local Flood Authority.
- Ordinary water courses fell under the remit of the Flood Risk Authority.
- The EA had an overarching interest and responsibility for Flood Risk.
- Regarding the Tesco culvert and the development on Bond Riverside, and the issue of flooding of the Northcroft ditch, it had been an existing problem that the Council was now aware of. There had been dialogue with residents, and the EA about studies and about funding which had been well received in the first instance for looking at funding towards a more detailed study of the hydrology in the area.
- As lead Local Flood Authority, the Council was committed to looking at actions to mitigate and remove if it could, or to make it less risky for residents.
- The Council would be to ensure that any development on Bond Riverside would not make the situation worse, which was encapsulated in the Sustainable Drainage Supplementary Planning Guidance, and planning policy.
- Any development upstream of the location, not just Bond Riverside, through the Council's planning policies would ensure that it improved or certainly would not make it worse.
- The Council would look for betterment of the downstream flow.
- The Council had entered dialogue with residents, with Councillors meeting residents about the issues.
- The Newbury Drainage and Flood Forum was a good group to discuss the issues and engage with residents through.
- The Council would look for future engagement opportunities and continue to engage because there was a flood risk there.
- Regarding creating a critical path committee, there were many flood risk areas throughout the district and the creation of a Critical Path Committee for all of them would be disproportionate to each individual risk.
- There was existing governance that the Council could use, such as the Newbury Town Centre Masterplan which encompassed the Bond Riverside site, and the Council's own corporate programme governance mechanisms could be used to manage the governance of the project.
- Would be happy to engage with residents through the proper forums.
- The project would be worth looking at and taking forward.

Councillor Abbs stated that the significance of the Bond Riverside project warranted a Critical Path Committee:

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- There should be a person with good local knowledge to feed into the Critical Path Committee to deliver on the Riverside Culvert.
- Decision making for Riverside Culvert should be simplified, with a steering committee giving an executive summary from a trusted source.

Councillor Tony Vickers noted that:

- The Bond Riverside site was a key site and warranted a Critical Path Committee.
- There would be less hard surface at Bond Riverside, and would be more permeable surfaces, with the net result of the overall development being less of a burden on the drainage system.
- The original report completed by Avison Young for the previous administration stated that the entire site should be looked at comprehensively because of the interdependences between each part of the Bond Riverside site. The Highways links and the drainage links.
- He had previously argued that there should be a comprehensive drainage plan at the site, but stated he would defer to experts.
- If it could be developed in a piecemeal way, leases would be easier on an individual basis, rather than force the entire development into a comprehensive plan.
- Recommended that the Administration take on board the motion.
- Welcomed the opportunity to debate the motion in the EAG Open Forum.
- The Administration should take whatever decisions were necessary to cut through the issue of drainage and begin redevelopment.
- If the issue of drainage was not dealt with upfront, it would likely delay the redevelopment, which would not be in the interest of the district.
- The formation of a committee that could deal with the issue would be beneficial.
- The Bond Riverside Culvert and the drainage aspect of it should be a prioritised and expressed confidence in the administration.

Jon Winstanley stated that:

- There was a delivery mechanism for the Bond Riverside site, with a project board and a lot of governance and oversight. The Bond Riverside site and all the drainage involved in it had a focussed delivery mechanism.
- Recommended that the Tesco culvert, which was a separate issue, should be taken forward separately using the existing governance within the corporate program, and not conflate it with the Bond Riverside, which was a development proposal within itself.

Councillor Culver stated that:

- The Executive would be looking at Bond Riverside on 23 May 2024, the motion should be looked at within that context to make sure that the concerns are considered.
- They were concerned that the site was not looked at holistically, with Tesco's, who were a private stakeholder, and other private land that could be used for Sustainable Draining Solutions (SUDS).
- It was not just an issue of the volume of water, but also the pollution of the water.

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- The Executive paper stated that the site would be looked at on a case-by-case basis.
- The issue should be looked at holistically, investigating the drainage from a cumulative impact perspective,
- The Council, as a Local Flood Authority and Local Planning Authority, should look at all of the issues together, so all of the stakeholders, public and private, look at the Northbrook stream, look at the SUDS across the entire site, and avoid concreting over sections of it or it would cause larger problems.
- Welcomed the paper going to Executive.

Councillor Abbs restated the four bullet points mentioned in the motion:

- Enter dialogue with third parties whose land was next to the culvert.
- To work towards a solution that considered historical and potential future development of Bondside River and associated areas where the runoff would go into the culvert. The Council should look at the problem over the past 15 years, and the cycle on which the problem first started.
- The Council would create a Critical Path Committee made up of key stakeholders focussed on the drainage issues associated with the culvert.
- The Critical Path Committee would report back to the Council on findings associated with ideas and plans coming from the administration.

Councillor Culver questioned whether the EAG Open Forum would make any kind of recommendation to Stuart Gourley as the Portfolio holder about the consensus that the group had about the motion.

The Chairman stated that he was advised of the recommendation and noted that the EAG wanted to see a committee, and that he would take the advice to the Executive. Was sure that the recommendation would be on a paper on the resolution to the motion.

The Chairman stated it would be unlikely to be discussed at the Executive on 23 May 2024. There would be another opportunity to discuss an input there, where the decision would be made, as the motion called on the Executive to the decision.

Resolved: The Chairman noted the views of EAG with regards the motion, and this would be reported to Executive

6 **Business Decarbonisation Highlight - Volker Highways: Jonathan Ulmer, Volker Highways**

Jonathan Ulmer gave a presentation on the Business Decarbonisation Highlight – Volker Highways:

- Measures being taken to mitigate climate change.
- Street lighting
- Recycled Asphalt Products (RAP)
- A340 Andover Road – Zero Carbon
- Retexturing – Improving skid resistance.

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- Cellpave™ HD
- Next Steps

Members asked a number of questions, and Jonathan Ulmer responded as follows:

- The Cellpave was no more expensive than the concrete, however there had been a wait of four to six weeks, whereas the concrete would have been available immediately.
- The OCL Regenerations® M-LS product was £5 more expensive than normal techniques, however, it would be worth the extra cost to achieve Carbon neutrality.
- Would like to see the use of Cellpave and OCL and other carbon neutral alternatives in the standard details drawings provided by West Berkshire Council. Jonathan Ulmer noted that it was under review to use more recycled materials.
- It would be the go-to material if it were specified in the standard drawings.
- There was nothing stopping the use of the materials, however, as it was not the standard specified material some people do not want to use it.
- The recycled materials were materials that had been planed off the existing surface and be re-utilised back into the products going forward.
- There had been several types of plastic surfacing, which appeared to look good being reused to patch roads, however, it was uncertain how a repair would be made if the road needed resurfacing after the introduction of the plastic. Jonathan Ulmer was uncertain how the plastic would be segregated, and how it would be recycled, or whether it would have to be land filled.
- The JCB Pothole pro would require a major road to be efficient. It would not be suitable on narrow roads and residential estates.
- Volker Highways were in discussions with an Italian Company called Simex, which had been developing a one-meter-wide machine which would chew up the road and mix the existing product, which could then be laid down, rolled and sealed all in one process. Jonathan Ulmer stated that if Simex agreed, West Berkshire would be the first county in the UK to use the machine.
- Other counties used a Jet Patcher, and Volker would be willing to use one where appropriate. Jonathan Ulmer noted that the Jet Patcher would not put strength back into a road, it sealed the road, but did not provide an effective long-term solution.

Resolved: Jon Winstanley stated that the Council was in the process of reviewing the term contract, because the current contract was ending, and a new contract would have to be in place by 2026. As part of the review process, the Council would be looking at the standard details and looking at Carbon or environmentally friendly versions of current techniques.

7 **Living Rainforest 2.0: Kirsty Shakespeare, Richard Bampfylde and Karl Hansen - Trust for Sustainable Living**

Kirsty Shakespeare, Richard Bampfylde, and Karl Hansen gave a presentation on the Living Rainforest:

- A learning ecosystem of animals, plants and people
- The vision of the Living Rainforest 2.0
- Development of the UK's Carbon Neutral Indoor Rainforest facility.
- Project Summary for Living Rainforest 2.0
- Sustainability approach
- Strategic Aims
- Visitor Journey and Vision

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- Space brief

Richard Bampfylde thanked Councillor Culver, Kofi Adu-Gyamfi, and Emily Ashton-Jelly for joining a launch event for the Living Rainforest 2.0 and stated that they would be welcome at a follow up to the launch event in the future.

Members asked a number of questions, and Kirsty Shakespeare, Richard Bampfylde, Karl Hansen responded as follows:

- There was public education, and during the school holidays there were different themes, with staff available in the rainforest to interpret and guide people around the rainforest informing them of the issues, animals, and plants.
- The United Nations (UN) sustainability development goals showed that everything was interconnected, there was no single act that alone would solve the issues facing the Rainforest. What people eat and consume had a significant impact. The Living rainforest had a holistic approach to education that connected previously siloed education.
- 2/3 of school visits to the Living Rainforest were by primary schools, and 1/3 were by secondary schools.
- The Living Rainforest worked with universities, corporations, adults, and children.
- Adults could have the biggest impact regarding where they invested their money, such as where their Pensions were invested, how businesses were investing, how they voted taking into consideration green politics.
- Children could have an impact by looking at what they did in their schools, or within their homes, looking at their diets, with ideas such as meat free Mondays, and whether there are plastic free canteens.
- Emphasised a solution-based education, to prevent climate anxiety.
- There was a lack of public transportation to get to the Living Rainforest, and a lack of a path from the village of Hampstead Norreys to the Rainforest.
- The Living Rainforest did not have the resources to transport people from the village to the rainforest.
- It would be beneficial if the local bus stopped at the Living Rainforest and Karl Hansen stated they would welcome the support of the Council to influence any possible changes.
- If the Council could help in any way to support the plans for the redevelopment of the Living Rainforest Centre, there would be more available to older children.
- Using technology had been a gamechanger for contacting certain age groups, with the podcast series and online webinars, there was more engagement from older teenagers.
- Teenagers who had been through the Living Rainforest system are likely to return and find other ways to engage with it.
- The Council writing to the local Member of Parliament could be beneficial, and the connections the Council had to other major businesses in the area could benefit the Living Rainforest. Businesses might not be aware of the global education program provided by the Living Rainforest, and they could be interested in collaborating with them.
- The Council could help the Living Rainforest connect with schools that had not yet visited. Once the Teacher Training Program had been set up, it could help the Living Rainforest engage with local teachers and support them in being able to join the training.
- The Living Rainforest were happy to host people, and would accept the Council reaching out, and the Living Rainforest would engage with them.
- The Living Rainforest would host a meeting of EAG.

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Resolved: Councillor Culver, Kofi Adu-Gyamfi, and Emily Ashton-Jelly would be welcome at a follow up to the launch event for the Living Rainforest 2.0

Resolved: Send around extra slides from Living Rainforest 2.0 - which were too small to read on the presentation – to members of EAG

Resolved: The Living Rainforest could be invited / mentioned during the Primary and Secondary Heads forums. (Jo Watt)

Resolved: Ensure that there was a link to the Living Rainforest on the Green Hub. (Kofi Adu-Gyamfi)

Resolved: Jon Winstanley and Kofi Adu-Gyamfi to investigate demand responsive transport for getting people to and from the Living Rainforest.

Resolved: Kofi Adu-Gyamfi to investigate hosting a meeting of EAG at the Living Rainforest.

8 Why and How I Halved my Carbon Footprint: Dr Pat Watson

Dr Pat Watson gave a presentation on halving their carbon footprint, with key points such as:

- The average UK person's carbon footprint
- Halving her carbon footprint
- Working with the community and partners

Members asked a number of questions, and Dr Pat Watson responded as follows:

- Pat Watson was working with their Parish Council to influence positive change but noted that it would have more impact coming from West Berkshire Council.
- Noted that people were worried and unsure about what they could do to help. There was a need for education regarding the ecological emergency.
- Residents living in the Lambourn Valley had a 40% higher Carbon Footprint than resident living in Newbury, which was directly down to travel and heating homes. Residents had to travel more miles to get to the shops and would travel further to better schools rather than the closest school.
- Electric cars would improve the carbon footprint, especially as those living in rural areas were more likely to have a driveway for charging. Residents were more likely to drive larger cars as they felt safer on country roads.
- Reducing speed limits and making roads safer and promoting electric car use.
- Electric use for rural homes is larger, generally because of the detached housing, which tended to be older with less insulation and heated via oil
- There had been resistance to insulating older homes.
- The environmental action team had been doing some work to make sure that good quality information was being spread.
- Retrofitting a home would require people on the ground, with heat pumps requiring more people. Most of the green jobs would be local jobs.
- Pat Watson stated that they would welcome talking to Thatcham Town Council, and any other group, about their presentation.
- The Take the Jump exercises would not take any upfront cost.
- Noted that Bean Beanland of the Heat Pump Federation would be a worthwhile person to discuss specifics regarding heat pumps.
- Pat Watson stated that buying carbon offsets were debateable and she would rather put money towards a Charity due to the increased accountability.

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- Using Zoom rather than making longer trips via plane or reducing the frequency of plane travel.
- Pat Watson recommended the Penny Post Eco Podcast as a good source of information and stated that Penny Locke might be in contact to speak at a future meeting of EAG.

Councillor Culver recommended that the Council investigate case studies of larger older houses with many radiators, and how that had worked out from a heat pump point of view.

Councillor Culver recommended that the Council find case studies of a typical house, and how much it would cost to get an air source heat pump installed and overcome some of the myths.

Councillor Culver recommended that the Council investigate who benefitted from Sustainable Warmth and get case studies from them.

Councillor Culver noted that the national schemes of Eco3 and Eco4, and noted the Council had promoted sustainable warmth, but had only heard from people for whom sustainable warmth had not worked.

Councillor Culver noted the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, and the £7500 grant for upgrading to an Air Source Heat Pump.

Kofi Adu-Gyamfi noted the Council worked through Industry networks and tried to influence the criteria that central government set for applying grants. Kofi Adu-Gyamfi noted that councils had become increasingly successful in terms of influencing the criteria. The Council's aim was to ensure that those who needed help the most could access future funding help.

Jon Winstanley noted that people could take advantage of schemes such as collective buying, highlighting the successes of the collective energy switching and solar schemes. If there was a heat pump buying scheme, the Council would seek to sign up.

Resolved: Councillor Owen Jeffery invited Dr Pat Watson to give a presentation to Thatcham Town Council.

Resolved: The Council find case studies of a typical house, and how much it would cost to get an air source heat pump installed.

Resolved: The Council to investigate if anyone benefitted from Sustainable Warmth and get case studies from them.

Resolved: The Council to investigate additional ways to promote eco-friendly choices to more people

Resolved: The Council investigate case studies of larger older houses with many radiators, and how that had worked out from a heat pump point of view.

Resolved: The Council to expect contact from Penny Locke regarding speaking at a future EAG Meeting.

9 Any Other Business

The Chairman stated that he wanted an action review of the Action Log to be part of the next agenda.

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10 Future Meeting Dates

The next meeting of EAG OF would take place on Monday 22 July 2024.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.48 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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