

Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum

Minutes of meeting held on 17th January 2012 at
Committee Room 2, Borough Hall commencing at
6.30pm

Members

Bob Wallace - Chairman
James Russell – Vice Chairman
David Mitchell
Nigel Jacobs
Barry Ingram
Steve Bunstead

Observers

Phill Fox – Bedford Borough Council
Simon Fisher – Bedford Borough Council
Lizzie Barnicoat – Secretary

Apologies

Graham Watson
David Binns
Sarah Hollands
Andy Gerrard
Mark Egar

1. Welcome by Chairman

Bob Wallace welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking everyone for attending following the rearrangement.

2. Public Questions

There were no public questions received, as no members of the public present.

3. Correspondence Received

The Secretary detailed the correspondence received between meetings; a number of items had been received from the Eastern Region LAF Coordinator including an invite to the Natural England LAF Conference which the Chairman would be attending. There had also been information regarding Access for all training, Minerals and Waste consultation document, and Huddle training information which would be detailed further during the meeting. There was also correspondence regarding LAF representation on Local Nature Partnerships which also would be discussed during the meeting.

It was raised if the BoBLAF had received any information on funding for community paths, and discussions around promoting partnership work, it was noted that at present nothing had been received, however, the Secretary to circulate any information if received.

The Forum Secretary had made an application to Project Involve which had been denied, those present then discussed how best to ensure information is shared and accessible to the public. It was agreed that in the interim period remaining with the Borough Council website as the access point to be continued with.

4. **Apologies**

See above.

5. **Minutes of previous meeting held on 3rd October 2011 to be agreed**

These had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting; it was unanimously agreed by those present to be signed as a true and accurate record by the Chairman.

6. **Matters arising from previous meeting**

6.1 LAF Annual Report pro forma – The Secretary had liaised with PF and completed the document with submission prior to the deadline.

6.2 Electronic circulation of staffing structure to Members - SF updated that awaiting confirmation regarding some new appointments within the team, and that once these have been finalised the document will be circulated.

Action

Document to be circulated –SF/Secretary

6.3 Distributing of Annual Report to stakeholder list - PF reported that this had not been sent at present, however, will be going out.

Action

Document to be circulated –PF

6.4 Bedford Borough consultation response – this had been submitted by the Secretary prior to the deadline, and SF updated that some of the Rights of Way proposals had been revisited to mean that there would now be a resource available to appoint a part time Definitive Map Officer. The Forum supported this, and noted that the job description is being evaluated and then the position will be advertised. The role of the Support Officer was also under threat, and following a review of resources there will continue to be role that provides direct support to the Rights of Way team. The individual that had been undertaking the conditions survey work is now taking on some of Zaria'a workload in the interim, however, the future of the agency post is uncertain. PF and SF reported that the department are very pleased with this outcome and feel it is positive for the team.

6.5 Central Bedfordshire Council RoW Department comparison – AG not present so this item to be carried forward. BW noted and gave an overview of the Central Bedfordshire LAF format, the structure of their meetings and SB detailed some of the topics discussed.

Action

Future Agenda Item - Secretary

At this point of the meeting the members discussed the continuity and restructuring following the formation of a unitary authority, being mindful that the impact appears to have been much more significant on the Borough Council. It was discussed how best to deal with the limited resource and capacity, as well as moving forward with a clear direction for the Forum in supporting the local authority and how the Forum can achieve this. The impression of users was discussed and further ideas of how to ensure a reasonable level of expectation is set and that these expectations can be met with the current resources and staffing.

6.6 Local Nature Partnership bid update – JR updated that the Bedfordshire bid had not been successful, however, those involved had been invited to meet with NE to discuss this further it was noted.

6.7 Rights of Way Improvement Plan update – PF circulated the final version of the document for consultation, noting that it formally commences on 23rd January and will run until 13th April, with circulation to all stakeholders. It would naturally be a main discussion point for the LAF and also individuals are encouraged to give feedback, with details given about how the information received will be compiled and considered. PF added that an electronic version would be circulated shortly and that a shortened link to the document on the Borough Council website would be available on Monday, this was praised and noted as www.bedford.gov.uk/rowlive

BW praised the quality of the document and thanked PF for all the input, which members echoed, agreeing that this document would be a main focus for the Forum. The discussion of the document at a meeting was considered, to ensure it is done in a manageable and structured approach so that a constructive conclusion and representation can be made.

Other items to be covered during the meeting.

7. A short break was taken by members.

8. The Role of the Borough of Bedford LAF and work programme for 2012/13

BW led the Forum through potential future workings of the Forum and how best to maximise the work done and identifying work programme priorities. It was discussed further how best to involve the Forum with the local authority's work done and using this to seek specific aims of the Forum. PF circulated a list of potential work items and was praised for the idea of topics, and that updates could be given on how items have moved on and will develop further as well. It was overall felt that it would be very productive if the Forum could be kept up to date with the local authority's work, allowing

the Forum to have input and opportunity to give advice during ongoing matters and projects. It was discussed and considered in detail by those present how best to alter approaches to maximise the productivity of the Forum. At the next meeting it was agreed that in addition to the RoWIP document discussion that SF and PF to give some background information on some of the main projects that are being focused on, thus allowing an efficient timeline to be put in place.

It was agreed that on 5th March an issue specific meeting would be held to look at the RoWIP document with invites being extended to key stakeholders so that they could come and discuss the document, this would also promote the Forum's work and may result in a recruitment opportunity it was felt.

Action

Issue specific meeting and invitation to key stakeholders – PF and Secretary

9. Feedback from Regional LAF Chairs meeting

BW had produced information document regarding this item which had been circulated to all prior to the meeting, giving an overview of the meeting and that all Chairs had talked about their work programmes and resource implications was clearly a common discussion point. The Forum representatives had then considered the Huddle tool, and potential benefits the initiative may bring, it is designed to allow the sharing of experiences and ideas. It was noted that there is training being held for Central Bedfordshire on 7th February and space at present is available for three individuals to be trained per Forum. It was suggested that the information be circulated to all members and that in the first instance RB, JR and the Secretary to attend the event.

Action

Circulation of information regarding Huddle to members – Secretary

10. Rights of Way Network

PF detailed the current work of the department on the capital project application for funding for bridge work projects, and that over £100k section 106 monies linked to a rights of way scheme in Renhold are the current focuses as well as outstanding network issues. SF explained that currently there are also IT network problems and the systems are fairly inoperable at present, which PF agreed with, the Forum felt that SH should be asked to continue to pursue this as it is impacting on the day to day productivity of the department.

Action

Information to be forwarded to SH – Secretary

BI raised at this point that presently there are no clear links for the areas south of the town to be linked up better to the network. BI's idea was felt as a good future discussion topic for the Forum to consider, as to how a total off road route may be established and use this as a case study for the Forum within the new work programme.

Action

Future Agenda Item – Secretary

11. **Volunteering**

PF gave an overview of the documents circulated to members prior to the meeting and the background that BRCC were commissioned to undertake a review and that a policy will be formulated with three key areas: public realm, friends of country parks, Rights of Way and access.

PF had broken down specific items relative to the Rights of Way and access aspect of this, looking at philosophy, 'contact', scope etc. The clear headlines being that keen to maintain existing volunteer groups and encourage new volunteers moving into working across the Borough area either as a group or individually. There were some initial concerns raised that there is the potential for many volunteers to be put off with the excessive paperwork required, and discussion how best to ensure effectiveness for volunteers.

12. **Any Other Notified Business**

None received

Meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed:

Date: