

PARISH CONFERENCE

17 JULY 2013

RBWM Councillors: Mrs Christine Bateson (Chairman)

RBWM Officers: Andrew Green, Harjit Hunjan, Simon Hurrell, Craig Miller and Karen Williams.

Parish and Town Councils:

Bray: Councillor Elvin

Cox Green: Councillors Doman, Monks, O'Brien and Stephen Hedges (clerk).

Datchet: Councillor Lyons-Davis and Graham Leaver (clerk)

Hurley: Councillor Baker (also Secretary of DALC) and Cherry Woodley (clerk)

Shottesbrooke: Councillor Warren

Waltham St Lawrence: Councillor Birkett

White Waltham: Councillors Brett, Kemp and Mullen

Wraysbury: Councillors Davies and Hughes

PART I

WELCOME

The Chairman of the Conference, Councillor Mrs Bateson, welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that, in consultation with the Chairman of DALC, it had been agreed that a separate briefing session on Public Health would be set up, to enable more parish councillors to attend. Details would be sent to all parish councils.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Anne Martin and Christine Gadd (Sunningdale), Mandy Robson Brown and Mary Cooper (Bisham), Doug Stuart (White Waltham) and Old Windsor Parish Council.

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 25 February 2013 were approved, subject to an amendment to page 10 to read:

- 'The parish council had *indicated* their interest in the lakes to the owner, but had not been notified when they had been put up for sale.'

BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN / NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The Conference received an update on the Borough Local Plan (BLP) and Neighbourhood Plans from Simon Hurrell, the Head of Planning and Property.

Officers were currently reviewing large quantities of information and studies, including:

- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which tried to put the borough's housing needs and supply in the context of the housing market of which the borough was a part.
- The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, which would be applied across the borough rather than just those areas susceptible to flooding. It was noted that the Environment Agency had recently reviewed flood maps.
- Architects' design advice had been sought to get a feel for the urban capacity
- Transport modelling, including the influence of Crossrail.

The draft BLP would be presented to Cabinet on 25 September 2013. A consultation with stakeholders including parish councils would start in early October 2013 and last for six weeks. The final draft BLP would be prepared for early 2014 and would be subject to a further period of consultation.

Conference noted the key risks:

- Data and data quality – the need for a robust evidence base
- Housing numbers
- Consultation outcomes
- The Duty to Co-operate with other local authorities
- Awaiting the examination – any delays could set back the timetable
- Any further changes to national policy

It was noted that eight Neighbourhood areas had been formally designated:

- Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale
- Bisham
- Bray
- Datchet
- Horton and Wraysbury
- Hurley and the Walthams
- Maidenhead and Cox Green
- Old Windsor

The Central Windsor neighbourhood area was currently under discussion, with the possibility of the area being split into three separate plans.

A Neighbourhood Plan Protocol had been developed to explain the roles of the neighbourhood plan group and the Borough Council in preparing a plan. This would be presented to Cabinet on 25 July 2013. It was noted that the Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale Neighbourhood Plan was at the pre-submission consultation stage. Nationally, only three neighbourhood plans had been adopted:

- Upper Eden, Cumbria
- St James, Exeter
- Thame, South Oxfordshire

Conference noted a number of issues around:

- Materiality – whether a developing plan became material in planning decisions.
- Resourcing
- Engagement and publicity
- Governance
- Scrutiny

In response to questions the Head of Planning confirmed that:

- The only information available to the council on immigration came from the census and further qualifications from the Office for National Statistics. It was noted that a powerful local economy attracted people to the borough, which put pressure on housing and land.
- Special circumstances would still need to be demonstrated to allow development in the Green Belt.

The Chairman commented that the Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale Neighbourhood Plan identified land to the side of the High Street as suitable for development of a hub, despite being in the Green Belt. Special circumstances included improving employment opportunities and making a feature of the town.

Harjit Hunjan, the Business and Community Partnerships Manager reminded Conference of the Community Right to Bid (CRTB) which stemmed from the Localism Act. The CRTB sought to identify assets of value to a community. Local groups could nominate an asset for listing, which would then be assessed by the local authority. If listed, the owner would be obliged to notify the council when the asset was put up for sale. At this point the owner would be prevented from selling for six months, to allow local groups to prepare a bid for the asset. At the end of the six months, the owner could sell to whomever he wished.

The council had received five nominations to date. Conference was advised that Neighbourhood Plans were a good way of identifying assets of value to the community. It was important to identify assets prior to going on sale.

Parish Councillor Birkett suggested that a closed public house in his parish may be suitable for listing. Parish councils were encouraged to contact Mr Hunjan if they wished to discuss any potential nominations.

CHANGES TO PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Conference noted the detailed briefing note included in the agenda papers. The changes removed bureaucracy and provided significant freedoms for homeowners, businesses and farmers to develop their property; however it was also noted that the changes could have a significant impact on local communities. Members had requested a report on how the new system was working be presented to Overview & Scrutiny in October 2013.

In response to questions it was confirmed that the changes could result in conflicts with borough policy on the Green Belt and the flood plain. Officers had anticipated a likely reduction in the number of planning applications however this as yet had not materialised. It was confirmed that if a development was subject to enforcement prior to 31 May 2013 it would remain subject to enforcement even if it would have been allowed under the new rules.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hurrell for his presentations.

INCENTIVISATION

Conference welcomed Craig Miller, Waste & Environmental Protection Manager to present on the boroughs' new weekly food waste collection. It was noted that all low rise households had been provided with a 23 litre external food waste caddy and a 7 litre internal storage caddy. Collections were extended to include flats and properties with communal waste containers in April 2013. This had been made possible as a result of a grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government for the borough's commitment to weekly collections. Food waste was collected by refuse collection crews on normal collection days. Refuse collection vehicles had split rear waste storage compartments.

Conference noted that the UK sent 16m tonnes of food waste to landfill each year. Analysis had shown that one third of the contents of black bins in RBWM was food waste. Rotting food in landfill produced methane, which was 23 times more potent than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas. Food waste was also a resource, therefore it made financial sense to recycle. Recycling food waste was approximately £40 per tonne cheaper than current landfill disposal rates.

Conference noted the waste hierarchy that was embedded within the national waste strategy. Food waste collected in the borough is transported to an anaerobic digestion plant in Oxfordshire and had the potential to produce electricity for 4,200 homes. Agricultural fertiliser was produced as a by-product.

The borough's Incentivised Food Waste Recycling scheme was launched on 22 April 2013 to all households as an extension of the popular incentivised mixed dry recycling Recyclebank scheme. The scheme was designed to encourage residents to maximise the amount of food waste diverted from their black wheelie bin. Residents needed to be a Recyclebank member to take part. Households would be asked to pledge each month to recycle food waste, for which they would receive 25 Recyclebank points. Each quarter they would receive further bonus points based on the amount of food waste recycled in the borough.

Conference noted performance to date:

- 48% overall recycling rate – 2012/13 (before incentivisation and launch of co-mingled wheelie bin based recycling services – 37%)
- 1,303 tonnes of food waste diverted from landfill since October '12
- More than 35,000 households registered with Recyclebank
- 189,863 rewards ordered in last 12 months
- £3.7million estimated co-spend – a benefit to the local economy

The clerk was requested to circulate the presentation to all Parish Councils. It was noted that the Waste Awareness Education Officer was available to visit community groups to provide further information.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that:

- If non-food waste was put in a caddy, it would be rejected at the first stage of processing at the anaerobic digestion plant and sent to landfill. Residents were urged to use compostable liners, kitchen towel or newspaper to line their caddy.
- The borough's refuse collection vehicles ran on Euro classification V diesel engines with an efficiency of approximately 4-5 miles per gallon.
- The subscription rate for Recyclebank was 56% across the borough (low-rise 69%, flatted 18%)

Parish Councillor Lyons-Davis commented that a number of properties in his road had not yet received a black bin. Mr Miller agreed to take details and get bins issued.

It was suggested that caddy liners, which residents needed to purchase themselves, could be available in return for reward points. Mr Miller commented that this was being considered, along with exchanging rewards for bin-washing services. It was confirmed that the option to donate to charity under the Green Schools programme was currently under discussion.

The Chairman thanked Mr Miller for his presentation.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Andrew Green, Corporate Policy Officer, presented to the Conference on the borough's Participatory Budgeting (PB) scheme. Mr Green highlighted the Neighbourhood PB scheme which allowed local groups to submit bids for funding of up to £2000. All projects submitted were then voted upon via the borough website. The council was keen to welcome bids from Parish Council.

It was noted that in recent months the winning bids had received approximately 200 votes. This level of support would be possible even in the smallest parished area. Those organisations that used the web and social media to 'get the vote out' were often the most successful.

Mr Green also suggested that parish councils may wish to develop a PB scheme to help them prioritise spending. Although no funding was available for this, officers were available to help parish councils set up a scheme if they wished.

DEVOLUTION OF SERVICES MENU

The conference received the latest version of the Devolution of Services menu. It was noted that a number of new items had been added recently.

The Head of Planning commented that the devolution of planning services was under discussion with Bray, Datchet, Old Windsor and Cox Green. The devolution of S106 was underway with Eton Town Council and Old Windsor.

The Chairman suggested parishes involved in the schemes present to the Conference on their experiences in six-nine month's time.

The option of a workshop to develop ideas was also available.

PRESENTATION AT THE NEXT CONFERENCE

The Conference recalled that, at the Conference meeting in June 2007, it was agreed that there should be an opportunity for Parish and Town Councils to share their experiences and successes in relation to projects and schemes that they may be involved with.

All Parish Councils were encouraged to submit suggestions to the clerk for future presentations to the Conference.

DATE OF NEXT CONFERENCE

It was noted that the next Parish Conference would take place on 8 October 2013.

MEETING

The meeting, which began at 7.00pm, ended at 8.45pm.