

RURAL FORUM

MONDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Christine Bateson (Chairman), Malcolm Beer and Richard Kellaway

Also in attendance: Liz Hadden (BCA), John Bloomer (NFU), Alan Keene (Bisham Parish Council), Annie Keene (Local Farmer), James Copas (Copas Farms), Louise Warbrick (TVP), Andrew Randall (Randall Farms Ltd), Nick Philp (David Philp & Partners) and Philip Mortimer (Fairacres Farm Ltd)

Officers: Shilpa Manek

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked those present to introduce themselves.

The Chairman explained the reason for postponing the Rural Forum on the 7 November 2018 to the 26 November 2018.

RBWM had received the sad news of the death of John Emmett, brother of William Emmett and a past member of the Rural Forum. The Forum observed a one minutes silence in memory of John Emmett.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Coppinger and Rayner and Paul Rinder, Geoffrey Copas and William Emmett.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting on 6 March 2017 were unanimously agreed as an accurate record.

UPDATE FROM THE FARMING COMMUNITY

Andrew Randall and Nick Philp, both gave a presentation to Members relating to farming. The main points of the discussion included:

- Seen extremes of all seasons which has had extreme effects to the ground and to livestock and to the crops yield, 15% down than last year.
- There had been a lack of rainfall and the forest fires had been devastating with loss of buildings and houses.
- It was great to see the entire farming community pull together to assist and support each other.

- The farming community were struggling and were all looking at increasing efficiency and reduce costs.
- The new Agricultural Bill was just in the process of going through. This would replace the CAP once we left the EU. Direct payments would be phased out by 2027.
- Currently environmental stewardship schemes to reach end of agreements 2020-25 and a new environmental land management scheme (NELMS) would replace it which would include payments for public goods such as soil health, water quality, air quality, carbon reduction, increased biodiversity and improving public access.
- The effects of NELMS to RBWM would include possible food prevention measures (more flood plain management and tree planting and soil management further up the catchments to hold water back), greater public access (farmers paid to increase public access to their land) and more biodiversity measures (specific to local environment and help improve species under threat).
- Funds were guaranteed only until 2022.
- Trade deals were discussed by the Forum.
- Farmers would lose subsidies and all RBWM farmers relied on them to make profit. All farmers would lose money. In the future, farmers would be paid only for looking after fields and open farms to the public.
- There would be a radical change in farming by 2027, it would not be as now.
- RBWM farmers exported malt, barley, wheat, corn and rape to many EU countries.
- Cattle feed grass silage was in shortage, 50% down as stocks had already been used. This had been substituted by forage from elsewhere.
- Food security was currently not an issue with supermarket shelves stocked but would be important in the future.

RURAL CRIME

Louise Warbrick informed the Members about unauthorised encampments statistics for this year in RBWM. There had been a total of 22, the most being in June (6) and August (7). There had been improved communications between the council and Thames Valley Police. If these became a criminal offense then TVP could use powers and it would be easier for residents to get support from the police. It was always better to have prevention measures in place and TVP had worked with the Council on injunctions and worked with other partners to put other measures in place. David Scott was best to contact for advice on unauthorised encampments.

There had been an increase in arson, of criminal nature, not natural. The Thames Valley Police were working with farmers to eradicate. There had been 36 rural offenses between April and September, these included hunting, theft, burglary and arson. The crime figures were the higher in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18 but Louise Warbrick informed the Forum that this was because crime levels were being recorded differently.

Other points raised by the Forum included:

- Two people from Datchet had been convicted for hare coursing in Cambridgeshire.
- There was a disparity in how forest fires were handled, some fire-fighters went in to put out the fires, others stayed out of the field. Forest fires were on the increase especially with climate change.

- The stealing of expensive equipment was a real problem but had now become infrequent. However, the industry had moved on too and had introduced more preventative measures.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A few points were raised by Forum Members, these included:

- The Borough Local Plan and the progress – Councillor Kellaway informed that it was currently with the Inspector.

ACTION: To have on next Rural Forum Agenda.

- Alan Keene informed Forum members about the Public Access Forum and that it represented walking and cycling in the borough. They were looking for members.

- Broadband Berkshire was discussed and it was agreed that it was still not very reliable.

ACTION: Place on a future Agenda

- It was requested that more councillors attend the Rural Forum.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Forum Members noted the date of the next Rural Forum on 4 March 2018 at 5.30pm.

This was due to be held at the Guildhall, Windsor but Forum Members requested it be changed to the Town Hall, Maidenhead.

The meeting, which began at 5.30 pm, finished at 6.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....