

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

11 October 2018

ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Interest area
Alan Keene	Bisham Parish Council
Steve Gillions	
Katie Sarsfield	
Margaret Cubley	
Christine Gadd	
Geoff Priest	
Councillor Maureen Hunt	
Ambika Chouhan	
Councillor Malcolm Beer	
Nabihah Hassan-Farooq	

APOLOGIES

Name
James Copas
Councillor Asghar Majeed
Anthony Hurst

**ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
11 October 2018
MINUTES**

ACTION

1 Election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman

Geoff Priest was proposed as Chairman by Councillor Hunt and seconded by Councillor Beer.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That Geoff Priest be elected as the Chairman of the Local Access Forum.

Dom Lethbridge was proposed as the Vice Chair by Councillor Hunt and seconded by Councillor Beer.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Dom Lethbridge be elected as Vice Chairman of the Local Access Forum.

2 Welcome, Apologies & Introductions

The Chairman, Geoff Priest welcomed all members to the meeting. It was stated that the previous Chair, Peter Thorn had resigned from the Forum and a letter of thanks that had been sent to Peter was read out to the Forum. The Forum were in agreement that a record of thanks be placed on record for Peter Thorn for all of the hard work and contributions made to the Local Access Forum.

Resignations had also been received but that this would be discussed under Members Update.

Forum Members were reminded that the meeting would be recorded, uploaded and available on the RBWM website.

Apologies for absence were received from Margaret Cubley and James Copas.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Forum approved the minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2017. Matters arising from last meeting.

Matters arising

Members of the forum discussed that there were two incomplete tasks which included HA22; which included the site design for housing and there had been questions around whether this site would be delegated for housing. There was still some work to be done before a decision could be finalised on this matter. Councillor Hunt noted that this piece of land was subject to the Hurley and Walthams Neighbourhood Plan and that she had written to the Borough Local Plan examiner with her concerns as this area had been designated as PROW Act Countryside Area land not for jobs and dwellings. A response had been received that highlighted collaborative work between officers, designers and architects along with parish councillors (who worked upon the neighbourhood steering group) should be carried out and the next meeting would be held on the 12th October 2018.

The Chair highlighted that a previous and ongoing piece of work with regards

to Ashley Hill and horse riders was in progress but outstanding. Work with shareholders of Ashley Hill, horse riders and their issues was in progress and it was noted that there had been a two year in delivery of this project due to some recommendations made by the Forestry Commission. Upon further investigation it had been highlighted that some owners had been communicated with in regards to the waterbed where a new mains line had been found with open drains. Councillor Beer stated that there had been some discussion when the LEGOLAND planning application had been considered that horse riders had raised concerns with overhanging branches and that the nearby woodland would need to be developed to provide suitable access pathways for riders.

ACTION- That horse riders at Ashley Hill be added to the next Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel meeting for consideration.

Members were informed that a plaque at Margaret Bowdery Bridge had been inaugurated on the 19th September 2018 . Ambika Chouhan (RBWM), highlighted that the steel bridge had been designed to be clad with timber over the existing steel work. It was noted that the bridge had been constructed with a composite plastic ramp and that this blended with the landscape well. There had been some set backs with the budget and ongoing maintenance of the bridge and this is why newer and more diverse materials had been used. Lisa Hughes stated that there were some issues she had noticed with the surface level change and that there was some noticeable large and loose gravel upon entry from the Braywick entrance of the bridge.

ACTION- Lisa Hughes to email Ambika Chouhan photos of the issues raised for further discussion.

At the end of the discussion, Members thanked Ambika and her team for all of their hard work and noted that this bridge was a great tribute to Margaret Bowdery.

3 **Declaration of Interests**

None.

4 **Minutes of the last meeting**

Agreed.

5 **Matters arising from the last meeting**

Ambika Chouhan outlined the above titled item. It was noted that there were two outstanding actions, firstly HA22 which was pending due to queries surrounding the use of the site. It was stated that this land could be used for housing but that this had not been confirmed at present.

Councillor Hunt stated that within the Hurley and Walthams Neighbourhood Plan that there had been an allocation of land for 100 dwellings and that this area was also classed as countryside area land under the designated Public Rights of Way Act. Councillor Hunt highlighted that she had written to the Borough Local Plan examiner and had shared her concerns over the use of land and the duty to comply. A response had been received and officers had been actioned to work with councillors (who formed part of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering group) and architects to work together proactively to achieve the best outcome possible. The Forum were told that there had been a meeting with the developer, architect and parish councillors and that there was another meeting being held on the 1th October. Councillor Beer highlighted that the provision of housing in the greenbelt should be subject to the rural exception

and highlighted that the area was also in the SCHLAR.

Members of the Forum were reminded that the borough was obliged to provide the same amount of area space if this land were to be utilised for housing development. It was also highlighted that Andrew Fletcher had been working with shareholders of Ashley Hill to resolve issues with horse riders. It was noted that there had been delays of up to two years due to the Forestry Commission recommendations. It was highlighted that work was being carried out with landowners who had been affected by the new mains line with open drains and Members were reminded that this could take a considerable period of time to resolve. Councillor Beer stated that he had been involved in the considerations of the Legoland Planning Application and had addressed several issues with horse riders, such as low hanging branches. It was stated that work would need to be carried out to develop and provide a suitable pathway for horse riders.

ACTION- To add Horseriders at Ashley Hill as an Agenda item for ROWHLP

Members were told that the Margaret Bowdery Bridge had been inaugurated by the Prime Minister on the 24th September 2018 and a plaque had been placed in her memory. It was noted that schools had used the bridge along with cyclists and that there had been good use of the bridge. Councillor Hunt highlighted the use of construction materials and it was explained that the bridge had been designed by Ambika Chouhan and she explained that a composite plastic ramp had been used to blend into the landscape. There had been some issues with the budget and ongoing maintenance of the bridge. The bridge had been clad in timber and this was done to keep the bridge within the local aesthetic. Lisa Hughes highlighted that there were some accessibility issues, such as chunky gravel which could prove difficult for those using rollators or wheelchairs and that the level change from the ramp was not smooth. It was suggested that photos of the issues be sent to Ambika and this could be looked at. Members stated that they felt this was a great tribute to Margaret Bowdery.

6 Members' Update

The Chair was informed that resignations had been received by Sara Church, Ian Wilson, Tom Jarvis and Rachel Forsyth.

Members welcomed Dom Lethbridge as a new member of the Forum.

7 Membership and staff update

The chair and forum wished to thank Andrew Fletcher for all his hard work and dedication to the forum.

ACTION- That Geoff Priest write a letter of thanks to Andrew Fletcher

Members discussed the need to find suitable candidates for the new vacancies and the Chair suggested that a small subcommittee be formed to work upon the vacancy campaign. Lisa Hughes, Alan Keene and Geoff Priest would form the membership of the subcommittee.

8 LAF Annual Report

Ambika Chouhan outlined the above titled report. It was highlighted that there was a proforma which had not been filled in attached and that it was to be uploaded as part of the report. The information would be populated by various

delegated departments and would form part of the formal Local Access Annual Report. Councillor Hunt queried the amount of expenses and it was noted that there had been refreshments allotted to the task and finish groups held last year for two working days. The total cost of refreshments totalled £200. Members of the Forum discussed the following:

- Milestone Statement and targets set
- activities of forum undertaken over the last twelve months
- Opportunities within identified large developed sites
- M4 Smart Motorways work progress
- Multi user routes
- Horse riding pathways improvements
- Disabled access and public rights of way
- Success volunteering work
- Closer engagement with parish councils
- Links with other local, regional and national LAF groups

Councillor Beer highlighted that there were no notable links with Surrey and that this should be considered as it was in close proximity to the borough.

ACTION- To add an item for a future meeting relating to the local links to Surrey.

9 **Accessibility of Public Rights of Way for People with Disabilities**

Lisa Hughes gave a presentation on the above titled item. The presentation highlighted the definition of the Equality Act 2010 and ways in which it could apply to public rights of way. Members were told that there were six key areas relating to disability that had changed within the Act which included; definition of disability, associative discrimination, discrimination arising from disability indirect discrimination, reasonable adjustments and that public bodies now had more duties. It was highlighted that public authorities must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that a disabled person was not put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled. The forum were informed of the s149, "public sector equality duty" where a public body must have due regard to eliminating conduct that is prohibited by the act, advancing equality of opportunity between people who have a disability and people who do not and fostering of good relations between people who have a disability and people who do not.. Members were also told that in addition to the public bodies listed in schedule 19 that the section also impose the public sector equality duty on others that exercise public functions but only in respect of their public functions.

Members were told that in sub section (6) that it was made clear that complying with the duty could mean treating some people more favourably than others and when doing so is allowed by the act. Guidance from the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) were discussions which included service providers who must also exercise public functions and to every public authority. It was outlined that equality impact assessments(EIA) should be carried out by public authorities and it was noted that RBWM had been good in this area and that EIA's had been a valuable tool to encourage service managers to consider the equality issues within service and to act upon findings of the assessments. Types of disabilities and impairments were defined along with the models of disability which included the medical model and social model. Barriers to green spaces encountered by individuals with impairments included issues with vulnerability in populated green spaces, high levels of disability related harassment, difficulty in coping with situations when unsteady on feet or when using wheelchairs and a feeling of unwelcome if a site was neglected or poorly managed. Other issues included a limitation to the provision of information

available, resources (such as additional equipment required for access to greenspaces), financial such as transport costs, car parking charges and entrance fees. It was also highlighted that some individuals may need a companion at the green space and could also face difficulty in getting to the greenspace where no suitable public transport was available. It was noted that there were also physical barriers at the site which were both manmade and natural.

At the conclusion of the discussion members of the forum discussed a range of topics which included:

- “reasonableness” test
- Accountability for removal of stiles by owner/occupiers of land
- Best practice nationally and examples
- Equality impact assessments carried out by RBWM
- Impact of social media
- British Standards and Inclusive Mobility 2005 guidance
- Schemes by National parks to promote accessibility for all.
- Easy access routes and signage
- Hazard flagging for the visually impaired
- Visual contrasting of access controls

Members agreed that access should be looked at to support all and to increase access to all, including families with pushchairs also. Members noted that it would be useful and interested to look at whole pathway routes and how access could be improved and developed. It was proposed that a task and finish group be formed to produce recommendations on accessibility improvements across the borough. It was agreed that Dom Lethbridge, Christine Gadd and Lisa Hughes would form the membership of the task and finish group and would return with draft terms of reference and update the group at the next meeting on progress.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That Christine Gadd, Lisa Hughes and Dom Lethbridge form the membership for the accessibility of public rights of way for those with disabilities task and finish group.

ACTION- That an update item be added to a future meeting agenda with regards to the task and finish group.

10 Progress towards existing public rights of way targets

Ambika Chouhan outlined the above titled item. The Chairman and Forum wished to note that the ROW team has an excellent reputation and that officers should be commended for all their work to the ongoing progress of the targets. Councillor Beer stated that he felt the number of gates to be replaced should be revised as it did not reflect the amount of work available. It was discussed that some gates and stiles had been replaced but that here had not been any more replacements or repairs needed and this is why the target had not been met. It was noted that the target was set by the ROWHLP and that the target had been set with stretch and pace, to accommodate any gates that would need replacing in the future. The forum were told that improvements had been made outside of the targets that had been set and that these had been carried out by volunteers and third party organisations, for e.g. the improvements made at North Town Moor. Christine Gadd highlighted that there had been some small changes made in the Sunningdale area and that some stiles had been replaced.

11 LAF Monitoring items

Ambika Chouhan introduced the above titled item. It was highlighted that the Forlease Road improvements were currently on hold as there had been some requirements set out by the Environment Agency which had hindered progress. It was noted that site works had recently been granted by the Environment Agency and that the works would continue for a period of 30 weeks.

Members were told that there had been great success with volunteer work this year. Berkshire College of Agriculture had carried out 12 days of volunteer work and Conservation volunteers had carried out 3 volunteer days which amounted to £2084.64 worth of cost savings. St Mary's School in Ascot had also carried out 3 full volunteer days. It was noted that there had been 31 days of volunteer work committed over the last year. The panel were very thankful for the work that had been carried out and commended the work of the volunteers. Councillor Hunt stated that at the recent ROWHLP, photographs of before and after works had been shown and that a letter of thanks had been drafted as a vote of thanks to the volunteers for their contributions. Members were also told that with regards to the M4 Smart Motorway that there were works outstanding with the detailed design. It was highlighted that this information would return to the Forum at a future date to update progress.

12 Feedback from meetings and conferences

It was discussed that in reference to point 3.7 and 4.2 that an update to the MBWLAF would be heard. Members were keen to review other LAF's and to discuss ideas locally.

13 Date of the next meeting

Members noted the date of the next meeting and it was resolved unanimously that the November meeting be postponed and new meeting for January be scheduled.

The meeting, which started at 6.30 pm, ended at 8.09 pm.