

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM held on Friday 19 March 2010 at Jubilee Hall, Knutsford.

PRESENT:

Forum Members

John White (in the Chair)
Robert Anderson
Neil Collie
Helen Connolly
Andy Gildon
Dale Langham
Andrew Needham
Keith Osborn
Keith Pennyfather
Michael Scott
Kath Wurbacher

Officers and others

Genni Butler, Cheshire East Council
Rachel Graves, Cheshire East Council
Amy Rushton, Cheshire East Council
Hazel Barber, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Laura Shakeshaft, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Angela Simpson, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Denise Snelson, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Martin Thornhill, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Caroline Wilkinson, *pmpgenesis*
Graham Dutton, Warrington Borough Council
Dan Johnston, JACOBS
Anna McFarlane, JACOBS
Simon Hayton, JACOBS

Two members of public were present.

Action

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Rachel Bailey, Ken Edwards and John Taylor.

2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Minutes 37 – Cheshire East Policy on Structures on Public Rights of Way

The Cheshire East Council Public Rights of Way Committee had adopted the Policy on Structures on Public Rights of Way at its meeting on 1 March 2010.

Minute 38 Local Transport Plan

Michael Scott confirmed that a response had been submitted on behalf of the Forum to the Local Transport Plan consultation. No

response had yet been received.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

3 A556 PROJECT

Don Johnston, Anna McFarlane and Simon Hayton from Jacobs attended the Forum to brief Members on the Amended Preferred Route for the A556.

An announcement had been made that morning of the amended preferred route of the A556 scheme from Junction 19 of M6 to Junction 7 of M56. The scheme would include an improved layout of the M56 Junction 7; a split level junction with the A50 between Hoo Green and Mere; a direct connection to M6 Junction 19, and the villages of Bucklow Hill and Mere would be bypassed. Before an application for Development Consent was submitted to the Infrastructure Planning Commission, a public consultation would be held to seek views on more detailed proposals.

The public rights of way affected by the proposed new road were highlighted to the Forum. A non-motorised survey was to be carried out which aimed to obtain baseline information on pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian traffic. It was proposed that face to face interviews be carried out at various locations along the route. Each survey would last for 12 hours and would take place midweek and at weekends. The survey would identify the popular routes currently used; the aspirations of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders; identify circular routes, and allow concerns and comments about the scheme proposals to be raised and suggested improvements to be noted. A wide range of user groups would also be consulted on the proposals.

Forum members asked a number of questions about the proposed route and survey to which the officers from Jacobs responded. They were asked to submit any further comments to Anna McFarlane with by email to anna.mcfarlane@jacobs.com or by post to

Anna McFarlane
Jacobs
Fairbarn House
Ashton Lane
Sale
M33 6WP

The Chairman thanks Don Johnston and Anna McFarlane for their presentation.

4 POST LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Forum was updated on the staffing structures for the Green Space Services in both Councils.

Amy Rushton reported that in Cheshire East since the last meeting, Richard Doran had been appointed to the position of Countryside Development Manager, Julie Molyneux had been appointed to the position of Community & Visitor Service Manager and George Broughton had been appointed to the post of Parks Development Manager. A copy of the staffing structure was handed out to Members.

For Cheshire West and Chester, Angela Simpson reported that the proposed structure had now been through the formal consultation process and appointments were being made. Officers were at present relocating to new offices and their new telephone numbers would be circulated to Forum Members.

AS

5 LINKS WITH PARISHES: THE ROLE OF PARISH FOOTPATH WARDENS

Following discussion at the last meeting, the parish and town councils in Cheshire had been asked, via the Cheshire Association of Local Councils, if they had a footpath warden. So far ten responses had been received which showed that three parish councils had wardens one had a footpath committee, four had nominated councillors for footpaths, one had no dedicated representative and one had a councillor who was a member of a public footpath society.

Members asked if any details were written down on the role of parish wardens and their duties. Graham Dutton reported that Warrington Borough Council had a parish warden scheme whereby parishes appointed path wardens who reported the conditions of the path network from their own surveys. The resulting maintenance items were recorded on a database for prioritisation and action. The Council provided guidance, training and forms for completion to the parish wardens. It was agreed that copies of Warrington's guidance and forms would be forwarded to Genni Butler.

GD

Andy Gildon and Michael Scott agreed to work with Genni Butler in developing best practice recommendations that the Forum could offer to parish and town councils.

GB/AG/MS

6 CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER OPEN SPACES AUDIT MEMBERS FEEDBACK

Hazel Barber, Green Space Policy Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Carolyn Wilkinson, *pmpgenesis*, briefed the Forum on the Open Spaces Audit carried out by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The Council had appointed a specialist sport and leisure consultants *pmpgenesis* to undertake an assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities across the Borough. The study aimed to map out the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities in order to prioritise areas for improvement and development and to protect important sites.

The survey had been sent out randomly to 10,000 households in the Borough and could also be completed on-line. Parish councils and sports clubs had been invited to attend a number of focus group meetings to discuss any issues.

The Council was now in the process of collating the responses to identify and assess the current and future needs of people living, working and visiting the Cheshire West and Chester area.

Forum Members were asked to review a number of maps after the meetings to help ensure that all areas of open space, sport and recreation facilities had been recorded correctly and were also encouraged to complete the survey on-line and submit any comments as soon as possible if they resided in the Cheshire West and Chester area.

7 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATES

Members were updated on the Rights of Way Improvement Plans for Cheshire. The report received outlined details of the current projects on general infrastructure, access for equestrians and off road cyclists, accessibility and events and promotions. Progress on the following projects was reports:

- Sandstone and Gritstone Trails – the walkers’ leaflets had been revised and reprinted
- Accessible Cheshire Countryside – new leaflets called “Walks for All” detailing accessible sites and routes across Cheshire were being printed, which were aimed at users with disabilities and also pushchair users
- discoverscheshire.co.uk – the revised site had been delayed due to mapping problems but was expected to go live in April 2010.

Members asked if the format of the report could be revised so that any progress with a project is highlighted in italics and also include details why any projects are not progressing.

GB/DS

8 FEEDBACK FROM NORTH WEST REGIONAL LAF CHAIRS’ MEETING

The Chairman reported on the topics discussed at the North West Regional Chairs’ meeting and briefed the Forum on:

- National Survey of Trails – a survey of national trails had been carried out and guidance was being issued on how to look

after them. It was suggested that a list of trails in Cheshire be brought to the next meeting so that the Forum can review them.

AR/MT

- Consultation on National Park Boundary Changes – a consultation was taking place on changes to the boundaries of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.
- Coastal Access – the Marine and Coastal Access Act had now come into force and Natural England was working on how to implement the legislation.
- Natural England Greenspace Priorities -
- Training Budget – bids had to be submitted by 10 June 2010. Members were asked to let Genni Butler or Denise Snelson know of any training requirements so that a bid could be submitted.

All

9 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

Keith Osborn and Michael Scott reported that they had attending training for new members and had found it very useful and beneficial and encouraged other new members to attend future courses.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Defra Consultation

Defra were seeking views on proposals to update the Government's strategy for the inland waterways of England and Wales – "Waterways for Everyone". The consultation document could be viewed on the Defra website and the closing date for responses was 26 March 2010.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/waterways>

Alleygating

The Chairman reported that the alleygate in Winsford, discussed at the September 2009 meeting, was now in place. He also reported that he had been consulted about an alleygate in Crewe, which was supported by all parties involved.

Working Groups

The Chairman suggested that the Forum establish a number of working groups to help contribute to the work of the Forum and reported that other Local Access Forums found them beneficial. It was agreed that further information on the role of the working groups be brought to the next meeting in June and Members were asked to bring suggestions on topics for the working group to this meeting.

JW

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on Friday 18 June 2010. at a venue to be confirmed.

GB/DS

