

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM held on Friday 18 June 2010 at Groundwork Cheshire, Northwich.

PRESENT:

Forum Members

John White (in the Chair)
Robert Anderson
Neil Collie
Helen Connolly
Ken Edwards
Andy Gildon
Andrew Needham
Keith Osborn
Keith Pennyfather
Michael Scott
John Taylor
Kath Wurcbacher

Officers and others

Genni Butler, Cheshire East Council
Rachel Graves, Cheshire East Council
Amy Rushton, Cheshire East Council
Angela Simpson, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Denise Snelson, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Graham Dutton, Warrington Borough Council

Action

12 MEMBERSHIP CHANGE

Councillor Rhoda Bailey had replaced Councillor Rachel Bailey as the Cheshire East Council representative on the Forum.

13 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Rhoda Bailey and Dale Langham.

14 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Matters Arising - Minute 38 Local Transport Plan

It was reported that feedback on the Local Transport Plan for Cheshire West and Chester would be presented to the Forum at the December meeting. It was suggested that Cheshire East Council also be invited to give a presentation to the Forum.

Minute 5 – Links with Parishes

Genni Butler reported that one further response to the Footpath Warden survey had been received.

Long Distance Footpaths in Cheshire

As requested at last meeting, a list of long distance footpaths in

Cheshire had been collated using information from Ordnance Survey Maps, the Long Distance Walkers Association and other walking groups. It was suggested that perhaps the Forum could help promote any paths that were underused.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2010 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Minute 3 - A556 Project

Fourth paragraph to include an additional sentence in relation to disabled user and amended to read as follows:

“Forum members asked a number of questions about the proposed route and survey to which the officers from Jacobs responded. In response to a question Jacobs undertook to devise a formula to identify disabled users groups and carry out interviews to find out their specific requirements. The Forum was asked to submit any further comments to Anna McFarlane...”

15 BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CHESHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM TO PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

Andy Gildon and Mike Scott reported on the work to date on the best practice recommendations to Parish and Town Councils.

A leaflet had been drafted which detailed best practice activities which could be undertaken by Town and Parish Councils and suggested ideas for promoting and developing the use of paths.

Discussion took place on ways to contact Parish and Town Councils to involve them in this work. Suggestions included Forum Members approaching the Councils in the areas where they live, and working through the Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Forums, which Town and Parish representatives on them.

Andy Gildon and Mike Scott agreed to look into these suggestions and report back.

AG/MS

16 POST LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

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

Cheshire East: There were no changes to report since the last meeting.

Cheshire West – A copy of the Green Space staffing structure was attached to Item 6 on the agenda – Public Rights of Way Annual Report. It was agreed that the telephone numbers would be circulated with the minutes.

AS/RG

17 WORKING GROUPS

The Chairman suggested that Working Groups be established as a way of getting people more involved in the activities of the Forum other than just attending the meetings

Following a brainstorming session for possible topics for the Working Groups, four were selected and membership of the Groups agreed as follows:

Funding - Ken Edwards, Andrew Needham, John Taylor and Neil Collie

Health - Keith Osborn, Helen Connolly and John White

Under Represented Groups - Kath Wurcbacher, Bob Andrews, Keith Pennyfather and Andy Gildon

Best Practice - Mike Scott, Andy Gildon and Ken Edwards

The Groups were asked to get together before next meeting to agree the work that needed to be undertaken.

ALL

18 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ANNUAL REPORT

The Forum received the Public Right of Way Annual Reports for Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester.

The Cheshire East Annual Report detailed the work carried out by the Public Rights of Way Team in 2009/10. The key areas of work undertaken related to:

- Maintenance and enforcement on the public rights of way network
- Public Path Orders and Definitive Map Orders
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Cheshire Local Access Forum
- Policy Development

An area of concern was the budget allocation which was falling short of meeting current and future maintenance demands on the network.

The Report for Cheshire West and Chester detailed the incorporation of the Public Right of Way function into the Green Space Service and the resulting changes to the Green Space Team structure. Work was being undertaken to create a Greenspace Strategy which would set out a vision and an action plan based on an assessment of community needs and aspirations for maximum cultural and recreational activity within the natural environment. The key areas of work undertaken by the Green Space Team during the last 12 months were as follows:

- Green Space Strategy Development
- Engagement of User Groups
- Cheshire Local Access Forum (CLAF)

- Cheshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006-2011 (ROWIP)
- Network Maintenance
- Definitive Map and Legal Orders

19 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATES AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT 2 DEVELOPMENT

Members were updated on the Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP) 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:

Cheshire East:

- Connect2 Crewe to Nantwich Greenway
- FP17 Bollington upgrade to Bridleway
- Nantwich Riverside Loop
- Publicity of improvements and ROWIP

Cheshire West and Chester

- Walks for All
- Accessibility
- Cheshire West and Chester publications & events

The new Cheshire East Right of Way Improvement Plan was being developed and would comprise a 15 year strategy covering 2011-2026 and 3 year implementation plans. Consultation was being carried out and would initially concentrate on confirming that the priorities identified for the first ROWIP remained valid for Cheshire East. As part of the consultation process Forum members were encouraged to complete a questionnaire on the priorities.

ALL

20 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY REGULATORY DECISION MAKING

Angela Simpson, Greenspace Manager, sought the views of the Forum on the proposed changes to the way in which the Cheshire West and Chester Public Rights of Way Committee functioned.

It was proposed that regulatory decisions on public rights of way matters such as Definitive Map Modifications Orders, Public Path Orders and Village Green applications be delegated to officer with provision for certain decisions to be referred up by officers or 'called-in' by Members for decision by the Committee where appropriate.

As a result, the Rights of Way Committee would not meet as frequently as at present so alternatives were being considered through which recommendations to the Executive on Public Rights of Way policy and budgets matters could be debated and formulated. It was therefore proposed that the Cheshire Local Access Forum formally undertook this role.

Members of the Forum were concerned that the regulatory decision

making was being taken out of the public domain. The Rights of Way Committee had been one of the most publicly attended meetings.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the following response would be submitted to the Cheshire West and Chester Council:

The Cheshire Local Access Forum notes with concern the changes in governance for decisions and advice in relation to Public Rights of Way in Cheshire West and Chester.

The Cheshire Local Access Forum's view is the following:

- (1) It accepts further delegation of responsibility in regulatory matters to officers.
- (2) It endorses the clear need for full information to be provided to the Chairman and sent to Ward Members on regulatory recommendations so that the 'call-in' procedure can work effectively.
- (3) The Cheshire Local Access Forum very strongly advise that the political membership and structures of the Public Rights of Way Committee should be maintained to comment on policies and proposals in relation to all Public Rights of Way matters budgetary & otherwise by Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- (4) The Cheshire Local Access Forum is prepared to become an advisory body to the Executive, as it is now, for all matters relating to the Cheshire West and Chester Public Rights of Way network.
- (5) The Cheshire Local Access Forum is concerned that it should have a consistent role in advising both Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East Councils.

21 FEEDBACK FROM NORTH WEST REGIONAL LAF CHAIRS' MEETING

The Chairman had attended a meeting of the North West Regional Chairs' on 10 June 2010. The main topics which had been discussed were :

- Constitution and Terms of Reference
- Manchester Local Access Forum
- Gating Orders
- Coastal Access
- Budget for Training

22 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

Ken Edwards reported that Bollington would be holding a Walking Festival in 15 to 31 October 2010.

Neil Collie reported that he had attended a User Group meeting for SEMMMS A6 project.

John White reported he had been consulted on an alleygate in Ellesmere Port. He had also received details on the Halton Local Transport Plan consultation

23 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on Friday 17 September 2010 at a venue to be confirmed.