

Wessex Cross Border Working Group

Wednesday 26 February 2014
2pm, Andy Young Pavilion, Mere

Minutes

1. Apologies and Introductions

In attendance:

Cllr Lester Dibben (Chair) (**LD**) – Shaftesbury Town Council
Cllr Tony Deane (Vice-chair) (**AD**) – South West Wiltshire Area Board (Wiltshire Council)
Cllr Steven Clinch (**SC**) – Shaftesbury Town Council
Cllr Andrew Cattaway (**AC**) – Dorset County Council
Cllr Fred Westmoreland (**FW**) – Amesbury Area Board (Wiltshire Council) and Amesbury Town Council
Cllr Mike Hewitt (**MH**) – Amesbury Area Board (Wiltshire Council)
Cllr Val Potheary (**VP**) – North Dorset District Council and Gillingham Town Council
Cllr David Walsh (**DW**) – North Dorset District Council
Don McLaren (**DM**) – Tisbury
Paul Willis (**PW**) – Dorset County Council
Steve Harris (**SH**) – South West Wiltshire Area Board (Wiltshire Council)

Apologies: Cllr Colin Winder (South Somerset District Council), Jason French (Highways Agency), Cllr Mick Hicks (Shaftesbury Town Council), Mike O'Dowd-Jones (Somerset County Council)

1a. Minutes from previous meeting on 23 May 2013

DW provided Housing Register figures for North Dorset (as at 31 December 2013):

Emergency – 2

Gold – 81

Silver – 339

Bronze – 984

Total – 1709 live applications

A further 303 applications are pending waiting for further information.

AD advised that a programme for building new social housing units is being explored by South West Wiltshire Area Board. One aim of this is to address the issue of older people under-occupying their current accommodation, often because their families have now grown up and moved out. The idea would be to build new accommodation in order for under-occupiers to move into, freeing up the larger accommodation for local families.

LD approved minutes from last meeting.

2. A303 / A350 / A30

AD advised A303 is 6th out of 7 major road projects to be considered by Central Government. Programme plan was to get info together so Government can make decision by autumn 2014. A303 work has increased in importance after recent flooding affected railway line at Dawlish. English Heritage currently taking position of wanting a tunnel and don't want road duelled. Hope is for road to be duelled along current route. Somerset are pushing for their road to be duelled regardless of what happens in Wiltshire.

MH advised that a proposed route was previously agreed. Government has previously agreed that tunnel could be built but will not fund it.

FW said that there would be more impact on landscape and area by building tunnel.

DW advised there was nothing on agenda this morning for Dorset LEP re. A303.

PW advised that there are problems with improving route A350. Extremely expensive; £80m when costed in 2008. Did not have support of region as a priority in 2008 and not currently prioritised by Dorset LEP. Trying to find way of relieving pressure by improving alternative routes. One way is to use A338 up to Salisbury. Other is to improve A35 towards Dorchester, and A37 to link into an improved A303.

Dorset was initially invited to join consortium; Leader's view at the time was that priority was A350. PW went along to observe and it quickly became obvious that improving A358 improves alternative route; in view of this the County Council is now more supportive.

DW stated that there was a need for Somerset to be represented within this group in order to ensure credibility.

AC felt that the Highways Agency doing their own work but were not involving local authorities. Was previously unaware of 4 counties meeting but looking for more active involvement.

PW responded that Highways Agency will say that they have tried to engage. Have attended meeting along with directors from other local authorities.

ACTION – LD to formulate list of all agencies involved.

ACTION – AD to liaise with Fleur De Rhy-Philippe to keep updated on progress re. A303 discussions and provide update(s) to group via SH when appropriate.

ACTION – PW to confirm date of next 4-counties/Highways Agency meeting and inform group via SH.

MH emphasised the need to get MPs involved.

3. Transport

AD advised re. new campus programme in Wiltshire, with one to be in Tisbury. Issues around transport.

DM gave update on work of Tisbus. Small organisation, service areas East and West of Tisbury. Aim to alleviate issues with transport caused by rurality. 3 major issues at present:

- Social; there is a need for community transport. Factors of isolation, population growing, in need of door to door transport. Capacity of people to reach bus stops is an issue, esp in rural environment. Significant dependence on Tisbus. From charity point of view onus is to keep going to do some good.
- Financial; founded in 2000 by well meaning individuals. Money available 05-09, income sponsorship, grants, legacies allowed increase to 4 buses (disabled access, capacity up to 16). 57 numberplate is oldest registration and no loans required. Since 09 there has been a drop in income. Depend on volunteers to be viable. Short of drivers and volunteers. Creates stretch on capacity to remain viable.
- Legislation / compliance; amateur led company, vulnerable to making mistakes in good faith. Vulnerable to new rules in relation to vehicles being run. Inspections needed five times per year. Specialised equipment inspections, all cost money. Insurance issues. Liability concerns.

Cannot guarantee a service as reliant on volunteers, so can't take on contract work. Sustained by community transport association who provide advice. Younger generation don't seem to be as used to the ethos of volunteering.

Operators grant and activity funding received. Can get grants for specific purposes (e.g. bus purchase) but doesn't cover it all. Have managed to put £3-4k per year into new vehicle pot. At present this year just about even due to increased payments for driver hours.

DW advised that for such groups it is not about finding volunteers, the need is to take care of the ones you have as they are often doing more than one role. DM agreed there is a danger of burning out the goodwill.

DW advised of a pilot scheme in Blandford where volunteers paid travel expenses.

FW advised that over last 10 years Amesbury Town Council have been gradually picking up jobs that used to be done by volunteers.

DM advised that safety checks, such as CRBs (now known as DBS checks) are a real issue. Suggested that group liaise with Liam Tatton Bennet, Community Transport Association to consider wider issue as he has an overview of all local companies.

VP advised that a Shaftesbury Transport Action Group meeting is taking place today.

LD advised that a this item had raised a larger issue of volunteering that may need to be considered again at a future meeting.

4. Gypsy and traveller site provision

MH advised a planning meeting due to take place this evening to discuss sites in Wiltshire

DW advised that he was not happy with consultation process in North Dorset. Example; forward planning, if caravan has two children then supposed to provide two future pitches. However, lots of people move into bricks and mortar.

AD raised concern that gypsy and traveller site near Wiltshire border has blighted local businesses.

DW advised that the problem is with consultants, who work from government criteria (DCLG). No problem with gypsies and travellers in the area but not knowing where the sites are going to be is a real problem.

ACTION – FW to request maps shared between officers of neighbouring authorities.

5. Any other business

DW advised that North Dorset has 8 neighbourhood areas designated. DW suggested that neighbourhood plan groups are asked to provide transport background papers when they are done.

6. Future meeting arrangements / topics (Education)

To be confirmed.