



# Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the PARISH COUNCIL FORUM** held via Zoom on Monday, 19th April, 2021 at 7.00 pm

## **1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL**

Councillor Baines, Chairman of the Council, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence received prior to the meeting.

## **3 NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The notes of the last meeting were confirmed.

## **4 BIODIVERSITY**

Tim Graham, Chief Executive Officer and John Clarkson, Head of Conservation from the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust gave a presentation (appended to the minutes) on the work of the Trust and the ecological issues that it was hoping to address

The Forum was made aware that Sir David Attenborough was a patron of the Trust and was helping to raise these ecological issues. The Trust wanted to raise awareness of the local ecology and work with Parishes by outlining some small and larger projects that they could undertake. Initially this could be just raising awareness in the area and highlighting where people could help. The Forum was advised that Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 stated that:

“Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”.

To aid parishes, a Parish Wildlife map tool kit was available to use and residents could approach the Leicestershire and Rutland Records Centre (LRERC) to find out ecology information on their local areas. Raising requirements in Village Design Statements, looking into maintaining hedgerows, planting and preserving rich meadows to encourage bumble bees and other animals and plants, and appointing Tree Wardens to log trees (particularly ancient ones) were all areas that Parishes could help with.

The Wildlife Trust finished their presentation by informing parishes of a £30million appeal that had been launched to kick start nature's recovery across 30% of England's land and sea by 2030. It was hoped that Parishes could help with this ambition.

During the discussion that followed the presentation the following points were made:

- Biodiversity should be given serious consideration in all planning applications and there should be policies that addressed this in the draft Local Plan..
- Forum Members were aware of a Biodiversity Action Plan but were unsure whether this had been implemented or if so, what actions remained outstanding.
- There were a number of Byelaws which gave Parishes powers under various Acts of Parliament.
- A new plan for UK-wide insect superhighways had been launched
- Parishes could apply to join a district level licensing scheme to manage great crested newt populations.
- The presenters were thanked for attending the Forum and it was suggested that, at a convenient time, the presentation was shown to the Planning Committee to highlight the issues and work being done by the Trust.

## **5 ENVIRONMENT: CLIMATE SUMMIT**

Councillor Lucy Stephenson, Rutland County Council's Climate Change Champion reminded the Forum about the opportunity to attend the county's first ever 'Climate Conversation' on Wednesday 12 May 2021. Councillor Stephenson would be hosting the event which would take place as a virtual webinar. She had already spoken to a number of Environment and Climate experts, together with professionals from other related fields who would be sharing their knowledge and experience with residents to support the Council and County in developing a network of Community-led Climate Action Groups.

The Forum noted that the Conversation would take place in two parts. There would be the public webinar held via Zoom with the guest speakers giving presentations on subjects such as community land usage, sustainable farming, river habits and food waste. The second part would be interactive discussion groups to continue the conversation, share views and ask questions. It would take place between 9am to 1pm.

Parishes were asked for their help in encouraging people to attend. It was an open event for anyone who lived or worked in Rutland. Setting up Climate Change Action Groups around the County would enable parishes to address environmental issues

Further information was available via the following link:

[www.rutland.gov.uk/climateconversation](http://www.rutland.gov.uk/climateconversation).

Any Parishes that wanted to speak with Councillor Stephenson on an individual basis could contact her at the following email address: [ClimateChange@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:ClimateChange@rutland.gov.uk).

## **6 EXTERNAL FUNDING - ACCESS AND PROCESS**

Mr Jake Atkinson, the Chief Executive, Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC) was present at the meeting to give a verbal report on external funding, access and process. This had been a request from Oakham Parish Council but was a subject relevant to all.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- LRALC's work included representing, training and advising the parish (including town) councils of Leicestershire and Rutland. It offered members information resources and was able to facilitate communication at all levels of the parish network - district, county, regional and national.
- Parishes had more opportunities to access funding pots/grants than local authorities and some of the details for these could be found on the LRALC website: <https://www.leicestershireandrutlandalc.gov.uk/uploads/lcc-monthly-funding-bulletin-may-2021.pdf>
- LRALC also published an External Funding Toolkit which was available by the link below and was a valuable resource. The aim of this guide was to help make the external funding process a little clearer for all, particularly those new to the process [About this toolkit \(leicestershireandrutlandalc.gov.uk\)](https://www.leicestershireandrutlandalc.gov.uk)
- Mr Atkinson encouraged Parishes to contact him if they needed advice on specific issues in their community

## 7 PARISH COUNCIL FORWARD PLANNING

Mr Mark Andrews, the Chief Executive introduced the Forward Programme to the Forum.

Items already detailed on the programme were as follows:

- Leisure (verbal)
- Highways and transport Working Group Process – Speeding
- Updates from previous items as appropriate
- Scrutiny – How the Parish Forum could contribute to this work.

An issue of concern highlighted for consideration as a future agenda item was speeding.

A number of Parishes made particular reference to the problem on the stretches of the A47 that people walked along. Councillor Stephenson assured members of the forum that their concerns would be raised as a priority and that the highways team were already looking at using additional camera van units at these sites.

Another issue raised was regarding part of the A6003 near the village of Manton which would be closed from 12 April until 5 July 2021, due to extensive bridge repair work. This closure was needed to allow Network Rail to carry out demolition and rebuilding works on the railway bridge just north of Manton Top. The closure, between Uppingham and Oakham, meant that motorists faced a 26 mile diversion and were therefore finding other roads to use which in turn became rat runs and were increasingly dangerous.

Mrs Stephenson advised that concerns regarding this closure were being seriously considered and that officers were working with Highways and the Police to ensure that the proper road signage was in place to encourage users to follow the official diversion route. Mr Andrews also confirmed that they were discussing additional signage for HGVs. A meeting with National Rail was being held the following week and parishes would be kept up to date with any information. In addition, there would be further discussions with the highways team to see what more could be done.

**In terms of the Rutland Conversation it was confirmed that there had been a number of comments on the survey and these would be brought back to the next meeting.**

## **8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chief Executive provided an update on the Local Plan and the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) proposal since it had been presented at Council.

The County had submitted a successful bid to the Government to help fund infrastructure improvements for the proposed future redevelopment of St. George's Barracks in North Luffenham as a garden village.

HIF was a national programme managed by Homes England that had made £5billion available to support the building of new homes by making sure important infrastructure, such as improvements to roads and public transport, could be put in place at the right stage. Only local authorities were eligible to apply for HIF.

Full Council met on 22 March 2021 to consider the HIF grant and Councillors voted against accepting it. The decision to reject the HIF grant meant that the Local Plan would no longer be viable and would need to be reviewed and modified unless alternative options for the funding and development were put forward by Homes England and the Ministry of Defence (MOD)

Officers were in talks with the MOD and Homes England to consider the options and these would be discussed at a Special Council meeting. A date had not yet been set for this. Parishes would be kept informed as and when information was available to circulate.

## **9 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The dates of future meetings for the next municipal year would be circulated to the Forum by the Governance Officer.

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**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.58 pm.**

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