

## Wychavon District Council

### Notes of the first Meeting of the Agriculture and Migrant Workers Policy Development Panel held at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, 14 April 2008 in Room 28, Civic Centre, Pershore.

#### Present:-

#### Councillors:-

Mrs J C Dowty  
Mrs J A Pearce  
Mrs A Steel  
Mrs E K Stokes  
K N Wright

#### Officers:-

Gill Collin  
Phil Merrick  
Chris Brooks  
Chris Wilkes

#### 1. Appointment of Chairman.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs E K Stokes, seconded by Councillor K Wright, and

#### Resolved

That Councillor Mrs A Steel be appointed Chairman of the Panel for the ensuing Municipal Year.

#### 2. Apologies for absence.

There were none.

#### 3. Declarations of interests.

There were none.

#### 4. Membership and Terms of Reference

#### Agreed

(1) That the membership of the Panel as listed on the notice of the meeting be noted.

(2) That the attached Terms of Reference of the Panel be also noted.

#### 5. Progress.

Phil Merrick tabled the recommendations of the Vale of Evesham Agriculture and Food Distribution Policy Development Panel - February 2004, which included his current comments from No 37 onwards.

## Agreed

That the contents of the attached document be kept in mind and that the views of the Panel shown in bold against appropriate items be actioned accordingly.

### 6. Programme of Meetings/Work Programme.

## Agreed

That the following work programme be approved, subject to some elements of ToR 1 being carried over from 12 May meeting to 14 July meeting (as ToR 2 won't take up so much time) and to the 4 August meeting being brought forward to 28 July:-

<b>Date</b>	<b>Purpose of Meeting</b>	<b>Officer support</b>
14 April	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To elect a Chairman.</li><li>2. To briefly review the progress on the previous recommendations of the Panel.</li><li>3. To agree a timetable of meetings.</li><li>4. To discuss the programme outlined below</li></ol>	Phil Merrick Gill Collin
12 May	ToR 1	Phil Merrick Gill Collin Chris Brooks Liz Dyde/Elaine Salter Andrew Bilborough Kath Smith
23 June <b>ALL DAY</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. A.M. Visit Herefordshire Planning Office to discover how they deal with horticultural/migrant worker issues.</li><li>2. P.M. Visit S A Davies, Brook Farm, Marden, Hereford.</li></ol>	Phil Merrick Gill Collin Chris Brooks Planning Officers? Fred Davies? Housing Officers?
14 July	ToR 2	Phil Merrick Gill Collin Chris Brooks Vic Allison

28 July (previously 4 Aug)	ToR 3	Phil Merrick Gill Collin Chris Brooks Fred Davies
15 September	ToR 4 + any other outstanding issues	Phil Merrick Gill Collin Chris Brooks
6 October	To agree format & content of report	Phil Merrick Gill Collin Chris Brooks
27 October	To finalise report	Phil Merrick Gill Collin Chris Brooks

The Meeting closed at 3.45 p.m.

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# Minute Item 4

## PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE

### AGRICULTURE AND MIGRANT WORKERS POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

1. To improve awareness of the scale and characteristics of migrant workers in the area and examine their impact on local communities and services, including housing, employment, health and education. Measures to manage this impact will be examined.
2. To continue to investigate, and to promote, best practice in dealing with lorry generating uses in the distribution sector, including options for relocation, such as to Vale Park
3. To further analyse the implications high volume food packing and distribution uses on the character of rural areas and provide an evidence base for the development of the policy framework for these uses through the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy
4. To continue to ascertain the effect, in terms across the board, of the continually changing practices of growers and employers in the District

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PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCE NUMBERS		COMMENTS (as at April 2008)
<b>Planning Policy Matters:</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	
1.	The Panel fully endorses the Council's revised stance on planning policies for packhouses as it is a more realistic approach and urges that all new proposals are looked at critically under the other development control policies in the Local Plan.	Continues to be implemented.
4.	That all three Local Planning Authorities consider adopting planning policies in any reviews of their local plans to fully reflect and endorse the guidance in the SPG – Lorries in the Vale of Evesham.	Wychavon, Stratford-on-Avon and Cotswolds District Councils have all incorporated policies restricting increases in HGV movements in their Local Plan Reviews.
16.	The Panel strongly supports the allocation of further employment land at Vale Park in the local plan review. The further opportunity offered to enable traffic generating uses to relocate is a unique one and is a soundly based policy.	Vale Park Phase 2 allocated for employment purposes in WDC Local Plan adopted June 2006. Outline planning permission granted and many buildings benefiting from approval of reserved matters. WDC to become owner of 10 Ha to offer to HGV generating businesses in and around the Vale of Evesham. <b>More sites coming on stream.</b>
17.	The Council's general approach to not allowing residential development on vacated sites be continued as it represents a sound basis for good development control and also reflects the district's housing supply situation in strategic planning policy terms. Any exceptions to this approach would need to be very extenuating and have substantial benefits for local communities.	The only residential permission that has been granted since the report was published is at Spencer Commercials, Offenham, due to exceptional circumstances and the planning history of the site. <b>This may need to be reviewed and tightened up.</b>

24.	That the work of the Cross boundary Issues Group continue to be supported by the Council and the CBIG be urged to move forward on the basis of the original raison d'être for the Group.	Meetings continue to be held regularly. Next one scheduled for 14 April.  <b>That the Cross Boundary Issues Member Group – Planning Matters be kept in being.</b>
<b>Development and Amenity Matters:</b>		
2.	That farmers and other stakeholders in the food production business always seek advice from the Council on the siting of mobile homes whether planning permission is required or not in the interest of the character of the rural area. Issues regarding siting and landscaping are very important. The Panel recommends that the Council should produce a guidance leaflet on this matter.	Guidance leaflet yet to be produced. Action: Gill Collin  <b>This will need to be reviewed and may need tightening up.</b>
7.	All those involved in the industry should be fully aware of the amenity problems caused by 24 hour traffic movements off the principal road network and where rural communities are affected and they should, in conjunction with their principal clients (the supermarkets) seek to regulate such movements	Ongoing.
27.	The Panel recognises the importance of a number of 'primary' suppliers to the supermarkets and the Council should be particularly aware in decision making about the planning and community issues when such businesses have to expand. Where suppliers/ producers are not located on the principal road network , the Council should give support (especially primary suppliers) to find more	Ongoing. Success in encouraging suppliers/producers to relocate has not been forthcoming.

	suitable sites for expansion.	
29.	Haulage companies should be encouraged to relocate to Vale Park and financial incentives should be investigated for so doing and the Council should ensure that such vacated sites are only occupied in the future by businesses with minimal HGV movements.	Ongoing. The 'Council Land' on Vale Park Phase 2 is attracting interest from haulage companies currently located in the Vale of Evesham.
30.	That any new packhouses should be constructed adjacent the main road network to ensure satisfactory access by HGVs' unless it can be demonstrated that there are overriding reasons that they need to be located on a farm holding. The need to consider such developments outside of established settlement boundaries will need to be considered.	Ongoing.
31.	That extensions to existing packhouses and food processing premises shall only be allowed where it can be demonstrated that the development will not result in an increase in HGV movements, or they are required to serve the adjacent land holding. Section 106 agreements should be required to ensure the packhouse remains linked to a farmholding.	Ongoing. Relevant policies in WDC Local Plan 2006.  <b>That a tour of the district to look at appropriate examples be considered.</b>
32.	That applications for new or improved facilities at the premises of established growers are considered on their merits, taking into account the needs of the industry, the impact of the development on local residents, and the ability of the local road network to accommodate any additional traffic likely to be generated by the development.	Ongoing. Relevant policies in WDC Local Plan 2006.

33.	That growers are encouraged to develop a working Code of Best Practice that would allow them to share packhouse facilities, in particular to direct imported produce to packhouses sited in the most appropriate locations for processing and onward distribution.	No progress on a Code of Practice from the industry.
34.	That public bodies such as Defra, who provide financial support for new food and farming investment, will be encouraged to take into account this report when making investment decisions. Indeed, their funding opportunities should be used as a positive tool for encouraging investment in appropriate locations.	
35.	That local growers and producers always seek professional planning advice from the Local Planning Authority prior to undertaking any development or changes on their sites.	Pre-application discussions encouraged.
36.	That local growers, producers and local and national transport operators engaged in servicing local sites devise transport plans utilising appropriate local and strategic routes suitable for accommodating HGV traffic away from centres of population within the Vale of Evesham. As far as is practicable, all 'contracted' distribution companies also adhere to such measures.	Ongoing through Freight Quality Partnership. <b>We need to draw attention to local problems with satellite navigation.</b>

<b>Transportation Matters:</b>	
5.	<p>That all applicants for development affecting new or existing processing or distribution facilities including packhouses submit transport assessments and, where appropriate, workplace travel plans and lorry control plans with any planning applications to enable the Council to properly consider the proposals. The absence of such comprehensive information could result in a refusal of permission if the Council is not satisfied with the impact on traffic movements.</p>
6.	<p>In making development control decisions, the District Council and the relevant highway authority should have due regard to the unique characteristics of the road network and the pattern of lorry movements in the Vale and moreover, the implications for traffic growth away from the limited principal road network.</p>
8.	<p>The Government should investigate the merits and feasibility of regulating the traffic movements of <b>non- UK</b> registered lorries especially at weekends because of the adverse amenity impact on local rural communities.</p>
9.	<p>The Panel commends the work of the Freight Quality Partnership in producing and distributing the multi-lingual map of Worcestershire to assist international drivers. Other adjacent Counties are urged to follow this example.</p>
	<p>Ongoing.</p>
	<p>Ongoing.</p>
	<p>No progress. Peter Luff MP undertook to raise this matter in Parliament following last meeting of Panel 2 March 2006.</p>
	<p>Multi-lingual map produced. <b>That a wider circulation should be considered.</b></p>

10.	That a review of highway signage in the Vale of Evesham and the affected strategic road network in the area (including the M5 and A46 linkages) should be undertaken by both the affected highway authorities possibly via the Freight Quality Partnership and in conjunction with and supported by the industry itself with the aim of rationalising and clarifying road signage on a strategic basis.	Signage has improved. WCC aware of recommendation.  <b>That this needs to be reviewed.</b>
11.	That both highway authorities investigate the merits of and legality of multi-lingual signage for lorry drivers on the local road network.	No progress.
12.	That speed restrictions including the feasibility of 20mph zones in villages which are through routes for significant numbers of large vehicle movements be investigated by the County Council where local communities in the Parishes support this approach. The South East Worcestershire Transport Forum could be used as a forum for debating such issues.	Nothing to report.
14.	The Panel strongly believes that the use of single national contracts for suppliers in terms of food distribution is not an environmentally sustainable approach and cannot minimise road mileage by large vehicles on the road network. In areas such as the Vale of Evesham where there are large numbers of established distribution companies this asset should be exploited by the supermarkets.	No progress on this matter.

19.	That any proposals for lorry parks in the Vale should be based on a sound strategic case supported by the Freight Transport Association and other representative bodies. Such proposals should only be considered favourably if sufficient demand is proven locally and the site conditions in development control terms are favourable.	Nothing to report.  <b>That this could be included in the Joint Core Strategy?</b>
20.	The Council and the County Council should be positively involved in making representations to the Traffic Commissioners on applications for Operators Licences and the recent reluctance to do so should be reviewed.	Both WCC and WDC have been active in objecting to inappropriate applications for Operators' Licences.  <b>That an item 'Operators Licences' be included in the Agenda for the next Cross Boundary Issues Member Group – Planning Matters on 25 April 2008. It was felt that applications should be advertised in both Gloucestershire and Worcestershire because operators were working in both counties.</b>
21.	The Panel believes that there should be legislative change to allow third parties to be properly involved and make representations / object to applications for Operators Licences.	No progress. Peter Luff MP aware of our concerns on this matter.
22.	The Government should legislate to allow for neighbour notification / better local publicity as part of the Operator Licence application procedure.	No progress. Peter Luff MP aware of our concerns on this matter.
23.	The Government should allow Traffic Commissioners to interpret the legislation more rationally to allow persons affected by the traffic movements from an Operating Centre to make representations / objections and not just those persons in the immediate vicinity. The implications of traffic movements from an Operating Centre can affect	No progress. Peter Luff MP aware of our concerns on this matter.

	communities and individuals much wider than just those adjacent to a site.	
25.	The District Council should continue to be represented in the FQP and also the new Vale of Evesham FQP and, equally importantly, the local food and distribution sector should ensure they are well represented on this Group.	WDC represented. Nothing to report.
26.	The Panel does not regard the findings of the Halcrow Study to be particularly helpful to future decision making and the Badsey/Bretforton by-pass concept is one which may give unrealistic expectations to local communities. Moreover, the Panel are not convinced by the suggested cellular approach to weight restrictions.	Nothing to report.  <b>That this matter be included in Panel's final recommendations.</b>
28.	That the Local Highway Authorities be aware of the concerns of the industry about the co-ordination and execution of road maintenance projects and the effects on business operations.	No response from WCC.  <b>That this be kept under review.</b>
<b>Labour Matters:</b>		
37.	The Panel supports the call for the Government to carry out detailed research into accurate measurement of the numbers of casual workers in the Food and Farming sector. This should assess all forms of casual working including Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) and Working Holiday Scheme as well as the gang master system. The research should also examine the impact of casual workers on	Substantially more research has been completed in the last 3 years at the district, county, regional and national level.

	<p>local communities, especially rural communities. The Vale of Evesham would make an appropriate pilot study.</p> <p>That the Government should review the studies looking at the scale of migration following EU enlargement and assess this in terms of the agriculture/horticulture sectors and the impact on rural communities.</p>	
38.		<p>Substantial pressure on the Government limited extra funding in 2008/09 for some local authorities towards community cohesion (not Wychavon)</p>

39.	<p>The Panel supports the development of a national Gang master Code of Practice. However, the Panel believes that it should include a requirement for basic skills i.e. english language and appropriate driver training. The Panel will support efforts by Wychavon District Council in partnership with relevant organisations and businesses to seek funding for the delivery of a pilot training scheme.</p>	<p>Gang master Licensing Authority now been established. The council has organised a number of training events for local businesses to ensure that they meet GLA requirements.</p>
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40.	<p>The Panel supports the House of Commons Select Committee's recommendation that in areas where gang labour is commonly used consideration should be given to the implications for rural services and how these can be best managed. We recommend that the Government should support local agencies to pilot and deliver appropriate initiatives in the Vale of Evesham.</p>	Wychavon identified for support via IDEA
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41.	<p>The Panel recognises that the supermarkets are key to driving up ethical standards in the food and farming sector. We welcome the steps currently being taken such as the Gang master Code of Practice and ethical audits. However the Panel believes that ethical issues should be seen in a wider context and that supermarkets and suppliers should be part of finding broader solutions to their impact on local communities. The Panel recommends that Wychavon District Council works with these bodies in helping to pilot some local initiatives.</p>	Limited success with supermarkets
<b>Training and Education Matters:</b>		
47.	<p>A detailed training needs analysis should be undertaken for the food and farming businesses in the District. This should be produced as a collaboration involving businesses, Pershore Group of Colleges,</p>	Local research completed.

	<p>Evesham College, Learning &amp; Skills Council (LSC) and the Council. Funding to carry out the study and its findings will be sought from partners such as Advantage West Midlands (AWM), Defra and the LSC.</p>	
48.	<p>The industry (growers, producers and the distribution sector) need to have better links with the education sector and there should be more awareness and initiative amongst employers to ascertain the range of training available and influence the future direction of vocational training in the Colleges. Support should be given so as to increase awareness.</p>	<p>Improved links, highlighted by new industry panel at Pershore College.</p>
49.	<p>The flexibility of the Colleges to meet the industry's training needs in terms of the location and nature of training should be exploited.</p>	<p>Some good examples, including training programme involving amenity horticulture businesses and Pershore College.</p>
50.	<p>The Panel believes that any bids for training by the industry are likely to be more successful if the Colleges and other public sector partners are involved and such collaborative approaches are more advantageous for all partners.</p>	<p>Progress being made with positive examples.</p>
51.	<p>Measures to increase awareness of the major economic importance of the ornamental (e.g. plants, flowers) growing sector in Wychavon should be taken. In particular, plans to increase the level of training and business support for this sector are welcomed and supported.</p>	<p>Positive training support delivered at Pershore College.</p>
<p><b>Accommodation and Community Matters:</b></p>		
3.	<p>That the industry has due regard to the planning and other legislative implications of any change of use of properties to hostels especially in the urban areas and</p>	<p>To be further progressed under revised Terms of Reference of Panel.  <b>To be considered at the next meeting.</b></p>

	that advice is always taken from the appropriate bodies prior to the commencement of any use.	
13.	That the West Mercia Police be aware of the Panels' findings about the level of concern in the Vale communities regarding traffic speeds through villages and the perceptions of local population about the enforcing of speed restrictions.	Nothing to report.  <b>Noted that police have produced a news letter for migrant workers and organised an event for them at the Public Hall, Evesham. Also there have been various network meetings and updates on Port Street, Evesham. We should invite police to attend a future meeting.</b>
15.	The Panel strongly urges local food and farming businesses to work together to help improve the mutual understanding between the industry and the local community. Where appropriate the District Council and other bodies should support these activities.	Network meetings with businesses have taken place.
18.	Supermarkets should be strongly encouraged to 'think local' and become directly involved in their suppliers' investment decisions in terms of new development and premises expansion. Supermarkets are urged to support the Council's commitment to minimising the impact of suppliers' facilities on local communities.	Limited success.
42.	The Panel commends the West Mercia Police initiative in conjunction with key local employers to engage the resident casual labour force and address cultural differences to minimise tensions in the community.	Police have produced newsletters and organised events for migrant workers.
43.	That the Council looks into the issue of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in a co-ordinated manner across service areas to ascertain any incidences of	Improved communication between Service Units. To be further progressed under revised Terms of Reference of Panel.  <b>Supported and noted that there will be a presentation at next meeting.</b>

	<p>unauthorised HMOs' and ensure compliance with statutory requirements e.g. planning, Housing Act, Building Regulations, Fire Regulations etc.</p>	
44.	<p>That employers and the supermarkets ensure that any temporary accommodation used by any casual workforce complies with all statutory requirements.</p>	<p>Nothing to report. To be further progressed under revised Terms of Reference of Panel.</p>

45.	<p>That the pressure on the existing housing stock is recognised and this could exacerbate the situation after expansion of the EU in May 2004.</p>	<p>To be further progressed under revised Terms of Reference of Panel.</p>
46.	<p>That the Council should support the principle of small scale, on site hostel accommodation for resident casual workers where a robust case has been made. On site hostels or those nearby to premises in the rural areas be assessed against the countryside protection and residential amenity policies of the local plan review. This should be subject to new build facilities being controlled by way of a planning obligation to prevent unrestricted residential usage. If there is a continuing demand for such accommodation the Council should adopt interim policy guidance to facilitate development control decisions.</p>	<p><b>How many houses in multiple occupation do we have? This to be investigated and established.</b></p> <p>Ongoing when such planning applications received, e.g. Offenham 2004. No evidence of significant issues since report published.</p>

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