

Wychavon District Council

Notes of the Meeting of the Agriculture and Migrant Workers Policy Development Panel held at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, 6 October 2008 in the Training Room, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore.

Present:-

Councillors:-

Mrs J C Dowty
Mrs J A Pearce
Mrs A Steel
(Chairman)
K N Wright

Officers:-

Gill Collin
Phil Merrick
Chris Brooks
Kath Smith
Chris Wilkes

25. Apologies for absence and Notification of Substitutes.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs E K Stokes.

There were not any substitutes.

26. Declarations of Interests.

There were none.

27. Notes.

The Notes of the meeting of the Panel held on 15 September 2008 were received and noted.

28. Report of Panel.

The Panel considered its Terms of Reference in conjunction with the 2 attached advisory notes and

Agreed

That the following should be considered for formulation into recommendations for its final report:-

Terms of Reference 1st paragraph

- That the standard of employees accommodation should be kept as high as possible, whilst recognising that overall standards are not too good at the moment.

- There is an economic necessity to attract migrant labour to the area, but it is acknowledged that this will be made more difficult if Eastern European economies improve relative to Britain's.
- The quality of accommodation and facilities should be as good as possible to attract and retain migrant labour and should comply with Health and Safety requirements. There is not an objection to the provision of separate communal facilities so long as they are in proximity to the establishment's accommodation.
- Migrant workers need recreational time away from their base. Whilst there is little evidence of antisocial behaviour in the Towns, there have been instances in some of the villages. Wychavon encourages employers to provide their workers with things to do when not working. Locating workers nearer Towns or taking them to Towns would help.
- That the Sport England (Southall project) whereby migrant workers are encouraged to get involved in sport in the community be welcomed and hopefully replicated in some form, locally.
- That Wychavon and employers should work with the media to ensure correct information is published by them and any myths dispelled.
- That the end of the Agricultural Concordat for migrant workers and the ensuing difficulty in attracting workers be acknowledged.
- That community, town and parish councils and churches (e.g. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Evesham initiative) and village hall committees needed to be involved with migrant workers to help with community integration.
- That a pilot home farm study or accreditation scheme for migrant staff would help employers.
- That the use of web sites be maximised county wide.
- That employers be urged to take measures to assist migrant workers to learn or improve their English where appropriate and preferably on site using Business Link financial help.
- That employers be encouraged to register migrant workers with the local health authority as temporary residents.
- That smaller scale farm accommodation blocks for migrant workers be supported.
- That farmers be encouraged to submit planning applications for new mobile homes or to regularise existing ones to regularise their use and that appropriate landscaping be undertaken as appropriate.

- That good communication and working together was important for all parties involved.

Terms of Reference 2nd paragraph

- That the relocation of Haulage Firms to Vale Park Evesham be encouraged.
- That a survey should be undertaken to establish the requirements of truckers. The site at Upton Warren was cited as a very well run and used establishment.

Terms of Reference 3rd paragraph

- This paragraph was not considered appropriate for this study, but it was noted that a pilot study of satellite navigation for lorries was being undertaken in Suffolk and Somerset.

Terms of Reference 4th paragraph

- That appropriate information with regard to use of labour and employments issues for legal workers be sent to Peter Luff MP, Chairman of the Commons Business and Enterprise Committee. The efficient Australian method of checking whether workers were valid through a national web site was cited.

General

That any outstanding recommendations from the last study 4 years ago be included in the report.

29. Wychavon Housing Stock condition

Further to the report of the Council's consultants at the last meeting Kath Smith confirmed that they had miss interpretated Wychavon's figures by some 5 to 1. The consequence was that the percentage of properties in a poor condition was not unduly high.

30. Next Meeting

The final scheduled meeting was Monday 27 October 2008. It would be decided at that meeting whether a further one was required.

The Meeting closed at 3.25 p.m.

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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 of 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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AGRICULTURE & MIGRANT WORKERS POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Report framework for meeting 6 October 2008 (based upon agreed terms of reference of Panel)

1. Migrant workers – awareness of scale & characteristics- impact & examination of measures to manage impact

Evidence Base

- presentation by Andrew Rudd, Research & Intelligence Unit WCC – 12 May
- Presentation on Port Street accommodation by Andrew Bilborough – 12 May
- Sargeant Phil Stayte, West Mercia police – 12 May (Police publish literature in 8 languages)
- Jamie Jackson, Job Centre Plus – 12 May

- visit to Herefordshire 23 June
- Carol Trachonitis, Equality & Diversity Manager – web site (cost £10.5K + £8.5 K for translation)
- Visit to Withers farm, Ledbury

- 28 July
- Paul Southall, Norchard Farm
- John Paxton, The Diocese of Worcester
- Rob Mace's/Chris's update on Polish focus groups in Evesham (27 adults)
- Kath/Graeme re mobile homes on farms

- 15 September
- Andrew Billie, Evesham Vale Growers
- Sheila Moorcroft & Andrew Myers, Research for Tomorrow, Today

Emerging Facts re Migrant Workers

- ½ migrant workers register with a GP
- 1% claim unemployment benefit
- 2 out of 15 hostels are occupied by migrant workers
- 30% of private rented accommodation occupied by migrant workers
- 1428 Polish Clients have accessed Ethnic Access Link for information (check time period)

Main issues Arising

- migrant workers accommodation – urban & rural – differences in quality/standard of accommodation
- what to do about Port street accommodation?
- publish advice for farmers re temporary accommodation on farms? Landscaping. Traditional mobile homes vs swiss style chalets

- Urban myths re migrant workers - carrying knives, drunken brawls, drink driving etc-
- Benefits to economy
- Current problems of attracting migrant workers and impact on rural economy

2. Investigation/promotion of best practice re lorry generators

- Vic Allison's update on the potential relocations to Vale Park Ph 2 – AWM funding?
- Simon Higgins, Road Haulage Association – more of a practitioners' view!
- Written update of work of Vale of Evesham Freight Quality Partnership

Main Issues Arising

- success of Council in getting companies to relocate
- how to tackle vacated sites

3. Implications of high volume food packing& distribution on rural areas

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this is really intrinsically linked with 2 & 4 particularly – difficult to pick out anything specific here that wasn't covered in previous report – could that be our conclusion under this ToR?

4. Effect of continually changes practices of growers/employers

- visit to Herefordshire 23 June
- Polytunnels SPD and need for liaison with growers
- Withers Farm, Ledbury – different situation to most of ours – polytunnels – need for landscaping
- Whole Farm approach – very staff resource intensive
- Graeme/Kath – difficulties of monitoring temp. mobile homes from housing & planning points of view
- Chris's stats from DEFRA agricultural census – 15 Sept
- Planning application stats - 15 September

Main Issues Arising

- Mobile home issue
- practices are not rapidly changing as perceived
- impact of more recent difficulties in recruiting seasonal labour

Agriculture and Migrant Workers Policy and Development Panel

Subjects for Recommendations

- Website for Migrant Workers
- Continuing research through IDEA funding
- Working group set up linking Housing, Planning, Market Towns Manager, Building Control and Heritage.
- Work with media to ensure accurate information regarding migrant community portrayed.
- Migrant workers' accommodation
 - Small scale on farm blocks?
 - Advice for farmers regarding mobile homes
- Whole Farm approach (as Herefordshire)
- Relocations of HGV generating business to Vale Park - support and pursue. (AWM funding for relocating packhouse operatives in appropriate locations)
- Need for Lorry Park with Vale of Evesham.

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