

West Area Committee – 24 November 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the **West Area Committee** held on **24 November 2009** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J M Pullen
Vice-Chairman: Cllr S P Smith

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr C I Black	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr Mrs J Dillnutt	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr A J Humphries	Cllr Mrs M J Webster

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr D Sperring	- Rayleigh Town Council
Cllr A Matthews	- Rawreth Parish Council
Insp A Parkman	- Essex Police
J Gilham	- Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
A James	- Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
D Fairweather	- Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Fowler	- Head of Information and Customer Services
S Scrutton	- Head of Planning and Transportation
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

306 AREA COMMITTEE – INITIAL BUSINESS

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J E Grey, T Livings, Mrs J R Lumley, Mrs J A Mockford and P F A Webster.

Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to inclusion of apologies for absence for Cllr A J Humphries.

At this point the Committee adjourned the formal meeting to move into the community forum to hear contributions from members of the public.

307 COMMUNITY FORUM

Questions raised during the Community Forum and the responses given are summarised in the appendix to the Minutes.

Responding to a supplementary comment made by a resident relating to the fence that had been removed in Swallow Close, Rayleigh, officers advised that a Council engineer, on inspecting the fence, had determined that it was in

poor condition and therefore needed to be removed.

Officers noted, in response to a supplementary concern relating to advertising trailers, that there was a large trailer parked on the edge of the roundabout at the Fairglen interchange.

Comments were made about the removal of an oak tree in Disraeli Road, Rayleigh and the erection of a fence, together with concern relating to the notification of residents in Disraeli Road about a planning application there. With regard to the planning application, officers advised that all properties in Disraeli Road should have received notification; the total number of properties consulted will depend on the type of the planning application. In addition, a site notice was also commonly used to provide details of applications. It was confirmed that Disraeli Road was a private street (a non-maintainable public highway), and therefore residents were advised to seek proper legal advice.

At this point the Committee re-convened into formal session.

308 SPOTLIGHT ISSUES

(1) Crime and Disorder in Rawreth and Rayleigh

Inspector Parkman provided a verbal update on crime and disorder within Rawreth and Rayleigh. A summary sheet of reported crime statistics for the West Area had been circulated in advance to all those present. Inspector Parkman emphasised that the basket of crime statistics were not indicative of all recorded crime; certain offences would not therefore be included in the data provided. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership had been set a target to reduce recorded crime by 5% year on year. The number of recorded crimes was 45 in August 2009, 48 in September 2009 and 49 in October 2009, which compared favourably with the figures for the same months in the previous year of 62, 60 and 62. To date, at a District level, there were 21 offences over profile, but there were 4 months until the end of the financial year and, as such, it appeared likely that the 5% reduction target would be met in 2009/10.

Turning to the anti-social behaviour statistics, Inspector Parkman drew attention to the fact that incidents of anti-social behaviour were complainant driven and thus subjective. An anti-social behaviour incident had no statutory definition, unlike criminal acts, but was very much related to individual perception. The reasons for the current increase in anti-social behaviour incidents were unclear but could be associated with an actual increase of such incidents, the public's decreasing tolerance of such behaviour, a greater public awareness and the fact that National Standards for Incident Recording (NSIR) have been in place for 3 years now.

At a Joint Action Group (a Sub-Committee of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership) meeting yesterday, a number of anti-social

behaviour incidents were discussed in detail, including reports of incidents in Sweyne Park, at Priory Chase, St Nicholas School, Fairview Park, Hullbridge Community Centre and 2 sets of public toilets in the District. Funding for Operation Lark had come to an end and the Police were trying to source additional Police overtime in order to continue this operation. This operation had been very dynamic, focusing Police officers in areas where there were most anti-social behaviour problems on Friday and Saturday evenings, such as Rayleigh High Street and Market Square, Rochford.

Joint agency work was in place to address the issue of anti-social behaviour in Sweyne Park, including the Council's Leisure team, Police and TASSC (Team around the School, Children and Communities), with a decision to do further work around diversionary activities for youngsters to try and address the problem. More information could be obtained from the Council's Community Safety team. In addition, the Police were hoping to dovetail into the work taking place with the Friends of Sweyne Park group in order to address anti-social behaviour incidents in the park and in roads nearby.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to the recording of incidents, Inspector Parkman advised that reporting was based on where the incidents took place rather than by the address of the person making the complaint.

In response to a Member question relating to whether anti-social behaviour can lead to more serious crime, Inspector Parkman advised that allowing low level criminality to occur could encourage more serious crime. However, it was important to emphasise that, year on year, recorded crime within the Rochford District was decreasing significantly.

(2) Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

The Committee received a presentation from John Gilham, Chief Executive of the Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, covering the Trust's annual plan 2009/10.

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- Prescription drugs were supplied by the drugs companies in packs of a certain size; the hospital did not break up packs when providing patients with prescription medications as the packs contained important information for patients. Any room for improvement in terms of efficiency would be dependent on national procurement changes, provided that patient safety could still be maintained.
- Business opportunities for the Trust included the possibility of tendering to other hospitals, to provide services, as was recently the case with a new

hospital that opened in Brentwood, and providing services as a result of GP patient referrals under the NHS choices register.

- Becoming a member of the Trust should not result in any conflict of interest for elected Councillors.
- Income from the hospital car park was used solely to run and maintain the car park. The Trust was seeking, over time, to recover the costs of capital investment in the car park. Hospital staff were charged to use the car park in order for the Trust to cover the additional costs of running the new car park. More detailed information on car park income would be provided to Cllr R A Oatham outside the meeting.
- The Trust had in place an emergency plan which addressed the possibility of an increase in swine flu cases. An emergency planning exercise had also been conducted.
- Under the NHS choices register patients were entitled to inform their GP that they wished to undergo treatment at Southend Hospital rather than, eg, Broomfield Hospital, if this was what they wished.
- A new catering system was introduced to the hospital in February 2008. Recent customer surveys of patients have revealed a high satisfaction rate with the hospital's catering service. The hospital also launched a feeding buddy service around 12 months ago, where trained volunteers sit with patients and help them to eat their meal. Nutrition is an important element in a patient's recovery and particularly so in terms of wound management.

(3) Rayleigh Area Action Plan

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Planning and Transportation on the Rayleigh Area Action Plan issues and options discussion document.

The consultation on the Rayleigh Area Action Plan would be running until the end of January and it was hoped that lots of comments from residents would be received. The action plan would provide a blueprint for deliverable change and improvements in Rayleigh town centre that was informed by public consultation. In due course a preferred options document would be produced, which would be subject to further public consultation.

The action plan seeks to provide a vision for re-vitalising an attractive and historic market town and examines in detail a range of issues relating to Rayleigh town centre including:-

- The quality and appearance of the town centre
- The range and mix of uses in the town centre
- Connections between the High Street, the Mount and the mill.

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- The function, quality and appearance of Websters Way
- Pedestrian movement.
- Traffic movement and congestion.

The action plan presents four different spatial options for change:-

- Low change: this includes options for enhancing and improving the existing built form and streetscape, eg, screening of service yards in Websters Way, landscaping and new pavements in Websters Way and addressing the problem of vacant units in the town centre.
- Medium change: this includes treatment of the building façades in Websters Way, backland infill opportunities, courtyard development, re-locating the market to the high street, junction improvements and better facilities for pedestrians.
- High change: this includes additional new development within the High Street and new traffic management.
- Higher change: this includes changes to a wider area, community hub, re-development of retail units, re-development of Websters Way car park, re-development of Eastwood Road, pedestrianising the high street.

Views were sought from residents, who can comment via the Council's online consultation service.

The following concerns were noted:-

- There was a lot of traffic congestion to the west of Rayleigh.
- Planting trees in Websters Way would cause problems for cars exiting at different points.

In response to questions the following was noted:-

- One of the options for dealing with less attractive buildings, including the police station, might be re-cladding or re-developing them.
- The area action plans were being developed by the Council on the basis that options within the plans were achievable over time, ie, 10 – 15 years, taking advantage of funding opportunities as they arise.
- Infrastructure requirements, including improvements to roads, were set out in appendix H1 to the Council's Core Strategy document.
- Rayleigh Town Council would be involved in the consultation process.

- The Council seeks, where possible, to keep hard copies of documents to a minimum, but will provide hard copies of the area action plan consultation document, on request, for those who don't have access to a computer.
- As comments on the consultation are made by residents they are placed on the Council's website and are viewable by all.

309 WEST AREA UPDATE

29/09 – Possibility of Planting in Swallow Close, Rayleigh (Minute 156/09)

In response to a Member enquiry relating to residents' concerns about the possibility of vandalism associated with the car park, which was now open and overlooked by residential properties, officers advised that the Council's Review Committee was looking at car parking in some detail; it was likely the Review Committee would look at the use of The Approach car park in its review.

32/09 – Joint Conservation Area Forum (Minute 265/09)

The Council continued to liaise with Chelmsford Borough Council on this issue. At this point in time, given the minor nature of the amendments and changes proposed, eg, improvement of the lock gates, erection of new lamp posts, it is not considered necessary to involve all stakeholders by calling a meeting.

One current issue, relating to the enhancement of Battlesbridge Conservation Area is the potential conflict between current Green Belt policy and recommendations in the Battlesbridge Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. The Council was in the process of producing options on Green Belt policy for consultation, which include a revised approach that will enable enhancement in Conservation Areas in the Green Belt, whilst still ensuring the character and openness of the Green Belt is retained. Certain elements within the Appraisal and Management Plan cannot be progressed until this issue is resolved, including water front improvements suggested in the enhancement proposals. Consultation on options for Development Management, including Green Belt policy, is scheduled to begin before the end of the year.

Both Councils will need to prepare a concept statement/design brief prior to a stakeholders meeting. However, this will first need to have regard to the outcome of any potential changes in Green Belt policy. Discussions continue between both Councils and a stakeholder meeting can be arranged when there is a need to discuss matters relevant to the integrity of the Conservation Area.

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H16/08 – Feasibility Study for a Pedestrian Crossing at the Top of Downhall Park Way, near Rawreth Lane (Minute 131/08, 269/08 and 265/09)

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation has made some enquiries relating to progress on the S106 works in Rawreth Lane. County Highways has confirmed that there were four contributions from Asda in relation to their store in Rawreth Lane, made by means of a unilateral undertaking, as follows:-

PN	Development Name	Contribution Description Information	Original Value	Received Date	Spent / Released
0762-01	Former Park School, Rawreth Lane	Mini roundabout improvements	40,000	29/10/2007	-
0762-01	Former Park School, Rawreth Lane	Waiting restrictions in Priory Chase	10,000	29/10/2007	-
0762-01	Former Park School, Rawreth Lane	Pegasus crossing	100,000	29/10/2007	4,915
0762-01	Former Park School, Rawreth Lane	Cycle facilities	40,000	29/10/2007	-

There has been a small take on the available funds to carry out some design work on the Pegasus crossing. The Rawreth Lane crossings have been a source of difficulty for some time. On the financial side the difficulty has been that one contribution towards the crossing ran out of time and the developer was unwilling, despite considerable efforts, to allow County Highways to retain that contribution. In addition, the costs of the crossing have escalated rapidly, more so than general inflation, such that a contribution that appeared adequate in 2007 is now insufficient to meet the actual costs. County Highways have been seeking agreement from Asda to using some of its contributions to meet the higher costs of the crossing.

Currently Asda wishes that the contribution towards the mini roundabout at the junction of Hullbridge Road, Hambro Hill and Rawreth Lane should continue to be used for those improvements rather than being committed to the crossing. County Highways was therefore seeking legal clarification as to whether Asda's agreement to the transfer was required or whether the transfer can be made by County Highways. County Highways was also pursuing other possibilities to obtain the balance of costs, including a bid to the community infrastructure fund.

There were also design issues relating to the combined crossing facility. Although it was possible to accommodate pedestrian movements across Downhall Park Way there was an issue around whether equestrian users could be accommodated in accordance with “The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002”. A request has been made to the Department for Transport relating to the possibility of authorisation for a departure of standards. In the meantime work is being progressed on a design for a pedestrian facility.

Officers would pursue with County Highways a problem that has arisen with traffic light sensors at the Downhall Park Way / Rawreth Lane junction.

H30/09 – Appropriate Traffic Orders for Emergency Access to Swallow Close, Rayleigh (Minute 264/09)

A traffic regulation order was required to prevent cars parking in order to ensure access for emergency vehicles. This would have to be funded under the highways localism budget as the owner has refused to pay for the appropriate road markings.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Chairman

Date

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Question

Response

Mr Stanley, Rayleigh

Can anything be done about the parking of advertisers on the A130? They have been there for some time.

The Council is actively investigating and taking action against unauthorised advertisements and banners. Furthermore, the Council is discussing co-operative working with Trading Standards. The trailers / advertisements on the A1245 reported by Mr Stanley will be investigated.

Mr Lovett, Rayleigh

What was the Council's intentions after the removal of the fence from the turning head of Swallow Close, Rayleigh?

The Council's intention is to tidy the area. An investigation has been carried out to see if it might be possible to provide some planting. Minute 29/09 refers.