

West Area Committee – 14 February 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the **West Area Committee** held on **14 February 2008** when there were present:-

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

Cllr C I Black
Cllr J E Grey
Cllr A J Humphries
Cllr T Livings
Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr D Merrick
Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr P F A Webster

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr A Matthews	- Rawreth Parish Council
Cllr Miss P Weaver	- Rayleigh Town Council
A Parkman	- Essex Police
P Tovell	- Anglian Water
A Duncan	- Anglian Water
N Blackall	- Essex County Council
A Spicer	- First Buses
T Lemm	- Regal Busways
A McGarry	- Regal Busways

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Fowler	- Head of Information and Customer Services
S Scrutton	- Head of Planning and Transportation
S Blake	- Environmental Protection Manager
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

61 AREA COMMITTEE – INITIAL BUSINESS

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs P Aves and Mrs J Dillnutt.

Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Declarations of Interest

Cllrs J E Grey, A J Humphries, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley, Mrs J A Mockford, R A Oatham, J M Pullen and Miss P Weaver each declared a personal interest in item 5 of the agenda, the West Area Committee update

report, by virtue of membership of Rayleigh Town Council. Cllr A Matthews declared a personal interest in the same item by virtue of being a Governor at St Nicholas Primary School.

Cllr T Livings declared a personal interest in item 4 (3) of the agenda, update on bus matters within Rayleigh and Rawreth, by virtue of being a regular user of bus services.

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

62 COMMUNITY FORUM

Requests for information had been received in advance of the meeting and a document summarising these, together with further questions received, is appended.

In response to concern raised about speeding in Victoria Avenue, Rayleigh, given that the last traffic survey was conducted 3 years ago, Acting Chief Inspector Parkman confirmed that he would raise the issue with the Mobile Support Unit and provide an update for the next meeting of this Committee.

During debate of car parking in the vicinity of Rawreth recreation ground, particular reference was made of the difficulty of accessing the recycling bring banks at weekends due to the high volume of vehicles parking there. It was observed that the football club had offered to police the proposed extension to the car park, as it would only be required when matches were being played. Wear and tear on any extension would be minimal and it might be possible to use tiles laid on top of the grass in order to keep costs down.

On a Motion moved by Cllr C I Black and seconded by Cllr R A Oatham it was:-

Resolved

That the Executive Board consider making provision in next year's budget for an extension to the car park at Rawreth recreation ground. (HFS)

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

63 SPOTLIGHT ISSUES

(1) Update on Rayleigh West Sewage Works

Mr Tovell apologised, on behalf of Anglian Water, for odour problems associated with the storage of sewage cake at the Rayleigh sewage works. He advised that Anglian Water had invested heavily in developing its Tilbury site to be able to store the sewage cake, but this had been delayed as a result of construction difficulties. He did, however, confirm that the Rayleigh works

would be cleared of sewage cake, and this would be transported to the Tilbury works.

Rochford District Council had served an abatement notice on Anglian Water on 7 February requiring them to cease causing an odour nuisance by 1700 hours on 29 February 2008. Mr Tovell confirmed that Anglian Water would comply with the abatement notice.

One Member observed that the moving of the sewage cake operation to Tilbury should also result in a marked reduction in traffic movements at the site. Disappointment was, however, expressed that it had taken such a long time to resolve the odour problem associated with the Rayleigh works.

(2) Update on Crime and Disorder in Rawreth and Rayleigh

Acting Chief Inspector Parkman provided a verbal update on reported crime statistics for the West Area. A summary sheet of reported crime statistics for the West Area had been circulated to all those present. It was, however, noted that the monthly totals for July 2007, August 2007 and September 2007 should be amended to 57, 42 and 44 respectively.

It was noted that, with respect to the basket of crime statistics, the total reported offences in October 2007 had decreased by 5 on the previous year and the total for November 2007 was the same as 2006. The total for December 2007, however, was lower by 31 than the previous year. This was primarily as a result of a reduction in crime in the Whitehouse, Downhall and Rawreth and Trinity wards.

Acting Chief Inspector Parkman advised that, although the monthly total for reported anti social behaviour (ASB) incidents for October 2007 was 1 lower than in 2006, the monthly total for November 2007 was 46 higher than in November 2006 and the total for December 2007 was 22 higher than that for December 2006. This was not, however, indicative of the trend for antisocial behaviour across the Rochford District, which had seen a decrease of around 20% during the past year.

In response to Member concern that reported crime figures for Wheatley ward were the highest within the west area, Acting Chief Inspector Parkman said that it would be necessary for the data to be analysed in depth in order to gauge why this might be the case. An update would be provided at the next meeting attended by the Police.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to statistics relating to street drinking and substance misuse, Acting Chief Inspector Parkman advised that the figures related to incidents reported to the Police and did not include any incidents dealt with by the Police during normal patrols.

Acting Chief Inspector Parkman indicated, in response to a Member enquiry relating to the figures for woundings contained within the basket of crimes

data, that the classification for woundings was quite broad. He confirmed that a list indicating the nature of incidents falling within that category would be provided at the next meeting attended by the Police. He further agreed to provide statistics relating to drug related crimes within the west area.

In response to concern expressed by a resident about the recording of traffic-related incidents, Acting Chief Inspector Parkman advised that, in broad terms, it was the policy of Essex Police to record only those incidents involving injury or offence, eg, drink driving. He confirmed that, during the period from 1 January 2007 to 1 January 2008 9 different road traffic collisions had been recorded along Rawreth Lane, 6 of which involved some type of injury. During the same period 33 road traffic collisions were recorded in Downhall and Rawreth ward.

Responding to an enquiry relating to the ASB classification of 'animal problems', Acting Chief Inspector Parkman confirmed that an update would be provided.

Acting Chief Inspector Parkman advised, in response to a Member enquiry relating to motorists driving while using mobile phones, that the Mobile Support Unit conducted spot checks, and liaised with Dan Carlin, the Road Safety Officer, in this respect. Those caught were issued an on the spot fine of £60 plus 3 penalty points on their driving licence. This offence was considered to be as serious as that of going through a traffic light.

In response to an observation that children were being encouraged to walk to school as part of the healthy schools and environmental initiatives but that this could be endangering them with respect to roads such as Rawreth Lane, which had heavy traffic going along it, Acting Chief Inspector Parkman advised that the Police and County Highways worked closely with respect to speed data. If there were problems with a particular road, including speed or volume of traffic, speeding recording data devices were put down in the road and vehicle numbers and vehicle speeds recorded.

(3) Update on Bus Matters Within Rayleigh and Rawreth

Mr Blackall, the Local Bus Service Manager at Essex County Council, informed the meeting that 85% of bus services across the county were provided by bus operators on a commercial basis. The County Council's role was to plug any gaps where the bus companies were not providing a service; this was often during evenings and weekends when passenger take-up was low and therefore revenue to the bus companies was accordingly low. The County Council did not have the authority to instruct bus companies to run particular routes.

The route of the no. 24 bus had been changed by First Buses and no longer ran to Little Wheatley Chase, but rather to Asda in Priory Chase. The County Council had looked at other bus routes and, given that Little Wheatleys was served by 2 buses per hour, considered that a replacement service was

therefore not required. The County Council would, however, continue to monitor the bus services in this location, looking particularly at usage of services, to assess whether any action might be needed in future.

Mr Spicer, of First Buses, advised that the no. 24 was an under-performing route during the past year. First had identified that the no. 24 service only ran 5 minutes in front of the no. 25 service, which went through that area every 30 minutes. It had been decided to divert the no. 24 route to Asda on Rawreth Lane as there were a number of better turning places for buses in that location, compared to Little Wheatleys. In addition, First Buses considered that, as further housing was developed along Rawreth Lane, the diverted 24 route would be better positioned to serve those properties. Mr Spicer conceded that there had been delays to the no. 25 service recently, as a result of road works and accidents. It was anticipated that once this settled down, reliability would improve.

It was noted that over 500 residents in the Sweyne Park and Grange wards had signed a petition calling for the no. 24 bus service to revert to its original route. The no. 25 route was not the same as the previous no. 24 route and passengers were now being forced to change buses in order to get to their destination. This petition was given to First Buses.

Members observed that the no. 25 bus was often full, with passengers unable to get onto full buses, while the no. 25 bus travelling from Asda down to London Road was always empty. Particular reference was also made of the importance of the no. 20 Hullbridge service, which also passed Southend Hospital.

It was emphasised that new housing developments would not automatically result in a requirement for bus services. It was felt that bus operators should be looking at serving the needs of the older population who were more likely to need access to bus services. It was also clear that double-decker buses were unsuitable for the elderly.

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- Wal-Mart had offered no financial inducement for the no. 24 route to be diverted to Asda.
- The no. 24 service had been under-performing and First Buses had taken the decision to divert the route rather than withdraw it completely. It generally took a period of up to 12 months for a bus service to settle down and develop and, although the diverted no. 24 service might currently be under-performing, it could, over time develop.
- It would not be financially feasible to run the no. 25 service every 20 minutes rather than every 30 minutes, as was currently the case.

- First was conducting ongoing surveys of the no. 25 service and would assess whether a larger vehicle might be required for this route. It would also look at whether there were specific peak times for the service that would benefit from an additional vehicle.
- First Buses before diverting the no. 24 service, looked at the option of a route from the Carpenters Arms up the A1245 and into Rawreth Lane. It was, however, clear that the additional time required for this route would have necessitated an additional vehicle, which was not financially viable.

Mr Tim Lemm, of Regal Busways, advised that the no. 3 bus service was started by Regal Busways as a result of the failure of the previous no. 35 service. Regal Busways was a small, independent company that only had a fleet of 25 buses. The no. 3 Southend/Chelmsford timetable had been developed by Regal in order to cover people's core journeys. Currently the no. 3 service runs every 2 hours, and this was all Regal Busways could afford to run at present. In the event of the service growing, however, the company would be able to invest more funds into it, with consideration giving to running buses hourly, rather than every 2 hours.

It was observed that there were some problems with the no. 3 timetable in that the bus scheduled at 7.24 am from Bedloes Corner to Rayleigh was too early for children going to school in Rayleigh, with the next scheduled bus, at 10.05 am, running too late.

In response to a concern raised relating to the difficulty of finding out timetable information, the bus operators advised that bus timetables were available from newsagents; there were so many different bus services that it was difficult to advertise them all.

Mr McGarry expressed concern about uncertainty associated with the reimbursement of concessionary travel to bus operators from 1 April 2008. Regal Busways had received a letter in January indicating that it would only be reimbursed for carrying 47 out of 100 concessionary travel passengers. Regal Busways would not be able to continue to run the no. 3 service, if this level of reimbursement was introduced from April. It was confirmed that an update on this issue would be provided at the next meeting of this Committee.

64 WEST AREA UPDATE

The Committee received the West Area update.

29/07 – The Status of Priory Chase (Minute 340/07)

It was noted that the street lights were still not switched on, however it did appear as though works were taking place during the half-term.

07/08 – Removal of Graffiti in Children's Play Areas (Minute 04/08)

It was emphasised that although Rochford Housing Association (RHA) had taken over a lot of the District's play areas, the new grounds maintenance contract would still cover these areas, with RHA being re-charged for the service. Non-offensive graffiti would be removed from children's play areas within 3 days under the new contract.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.

Chairman

Date

If you would like these minutes in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

Appendix

Question

Response

R Hollier, Rayleigh

Are there any future plans to reduce the speed of traffic on Victoria Avenue, as it has become unbearable? We have ourselves lost two cats to the road and a fox was hit recently. How long before it's more serious?

Andy Dellar visited Victoria Avenue, Rayleigh and found the road surface on all approaches to the crossroads to be serviceable. The road markings on Victoria Avenue look to have been re-marked south of Cheapside West, but those to the north are in need of re-marking. A request has been made that this be addressed as soon as funds are available. Markings on both Cheapside West junctions are in good condition and require no attention.

There is advance warning signing for the crossroads on Victoria Avenue for southbound traffic only; an additional sign for northbound traffic will be organised for the new financial year.

A speed check taken on Victoria Avenue in March 2005 in the vicinity of the crossroads revealed the 85th percentile speed of traffic to be 35.6 mph. The issue has been raised with Essex Police to request some enforcement.

Injury accident statistics for this road over the past 5 years revealed that there have only been 2 slight accidents recorded, including a nose to tail at the junction with London Road and a failure to give way on Cheapside West, neither of which were speed-related.

A Matthews and L Hopkins, Rawreth

What can RDC do and what provisions are there to extend the parking facilities at the Rawreth Recreation Ground to eliminate the volume of cars parking on the grass verge and pavements during the weekend football matches?

This has been an ongoing issue with the football clubs needing more parking on Saturdays during training and Sundays for matches. The problem has been exacerbated by the speed of the traffic in Rawreth Lane, an issue that is currently being considered by Essex County Highways.

Question

Response

There is a tree that obstructs part of the existing car park and reduces space. This cannot be moved. The recycling bins, currently sited in the car park, could be moved behind the fence onto the existing grass area outside the car park. This would improve the situation slightly but would not provide sufficient space to accommodate the weekend parking.

Further options would be as follows:-

- (1) To build an extension to the car park on the site of the existing play space and relocate the play space.
- (2) To extend the car park to the side nearer the bungalow, which would pose a potential nuisance to the neighbour.

Both of these options would raise issues of planning and cost, potentially in the region of up to £50,000. The Council has recently approved its budget and this project has not been included in the budget for 2008/09.

Could further clarification be given as to what areas of Rayleigh/Rawreth will be affected by the upgrading of gas mains, and what plans are in place for the upgrading of footpaths in Rawreth Lane and will these coincide with the gas main works?

National Grid gave details of their programme of gas mains replacement works at the last meeting of the West Area Committee. The programme of works and list of roads affected should be obtained from National Grid direct. Telephone Steve Edwards on 0208 9841133.

Footway works in Rawreth Lane are ongoing at present and will continue until the end of the financial year. The upgrade of gas mains is not likely to affect this road although the County Council will be in close liaison with National Gas before considering other footway works in the Rayleigh area.

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Question

Response

S Coombs, Rayleigh

Is there any possibility of installing a few benches in Sweyne Park so that people may sit and enjoy the views over the town and surrounding area?

This was a good idea. A report on playing pitches in Sweyne Park was due to come to the next meeting of the West Area Committee and this would also cover the issue of additional benches.

R King, Rayleigh and
J Henderson, Rayleigh

Please can the no. 24 bus be reinstated to London Road?

It was no longer financially viable to run the no. 24 service along that route. The no. 25 service does, however, continue to run in this area.

Cllr Beckers, Rawreth

Why is there no bus on Saturdays from Rawreth to Rayleigh or Southend?

There was insufficient demand for such a service and it was thus not financially viable.

A Stone, Rayleigh

The following companies have erected hoardings or signs facing onto Rawreth Lane at the entrance to the Rawreth Industrial Estate road:-

Makro, Franklin and Tuckwell Toys.

There is an active enforcement case looking into this issue.

In addition, the following have erected signs at the entrance to Trenders Avenue:-

Searles and Rawreth Fishery and Plants.

How many of these companies have been granted planning permission for their signs and, if any / all are illegal, what action will RDC be taking to effect their removal?

Officers would also look into the issue of signs at the entrance to Trenders Avenue. The Searles yard sign has been in place for many years, however, so it might not be possible to do anything about it.

Question

Response

The Council does look into issues relating to unauthorised advertising hoardings; officers attempt to spot any such hoardings and the Council, in addition, relies on members of the public to report any instances, which are subsequently investigated.

E Gillam, Rayleigh

Where are the gypsy sites to be sited?

The Council does not know. This is a matter that will be dealt with through the preparation of the Council's Core Strategy and site allocation development plan documents, which will in due course replace the adopted Local Plan. Consultation on the Core Strategy is expected to take place in June / July 2008.

M Suckling, Rayleigh

What is the proposed use of the shingle area at Asda's? Is it a petrol station?

Planning consent has been granted for a mixed use building, including retail and community uses, but the developer has not yet started works.