

## **West Area Committee – 12 June 2008**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **West Area Committee** held on **12 June 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J M Pullen

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr Mrs J Dillnutt	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr K A Gibbs	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr A J Humphries	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr T Livings	Cllr P F A Webster

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Cllr A Matthews	- Rawreth Parish Council
Cllr Mrs C Roe	- Rayleigh Town Council
L Harvey	- Essex County Council
A Parkman	- Essex Police
W Sharp	- Essex Police

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

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

## **200 AREA COMMITTEE – INITIAL BUSINESS**

### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R A Oatham.

### **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

Cllr S P Smith was appointed Vice-Chairman.

## **201 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.

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

**202 SPOTLIGHT ISSUES**

**(1) Update on Crime and Disorder in Rawreth and Rayleigh**

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 noted that, with respect to the anti-social behaviour statistics, there were 83 recorded incidents in May 2008, 75 in April 2008 and 64 in March 2008, compared to 45, 80 and 103 for the same months in 2007. The May 2007 figure of 45 was, however, the lowest recorded monthly figure and, as such, distorts direct comparison in that the figure seems very low when compared against corresponding months. It was further noted that 104 incidents had been recorded for May 2006.

Inspector Parkman indicated that the May 2008 total of 15 incidents involving vehicle nuisance/inappropriate use for Lodge ward was artificially high because, out of the 15 reports, 9 came from the same family. The Police were investigating this issue.

Inspector Parkman advised that, year on year, the Police were set a target to reduce incidences of anti-social behaviour by 5%. The current annual target was set at 2727; across the District as of today the cumulative total for incidents involving anti-social behaviour was 378, compared to the cumulative target of 418, ie, 9.7% under target.

It was noted that, with respect to the basket of crime statistics, this year there were 53 reported incidents in May, 59 in April and 58 in March compared to 51, 83 and 67 in the same months respectively last year.

Inspector Parkman indicated that the target set for reduction of basket of crimes was 5% per annum; the cumulative figure as of today was 577 reported offences, compared to the cumulative target of 575. The target equated to 8 offences, per day, across the district, which was very challenging.

Inspector Parkman concluded by advising that the Rochford Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership was this year funding Operation Lark, an initiative aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour; 2 additional Police officers would be out on the streets on Fridays and Saturdays from 6pm to midnight, in order to increase Police visibility at key times.

Police Constable Sharp advised that he was the Neighbourhood Specialist Officer for Rayleigh. His main role was that of dealing with local community issues; he was seeking interested residents to join the Neighbourhood Action Panel (NAP).

Monthly surgeries were held for residents at a variety of locations around

Rayleigh, including the Civic Suite, Asda, Rayleigh Library and the High Street. Police Constable Sharp also indicated that he gave talks to community groups, including, for example, one at Grange community centre on home security.

In response to questions the following was noted:-

- Ward Councillors would be e-mailed details of forthcoming surgeries.
- An item could be included in *Rochford District Matters* advertising the Police community work in Rayleigh.
- Instances of rowdy/nuisance behaviour were higher in Wheatley ward as this incorporates part of the High Street, with licensed premises.
- A definition of what sorts of incidents were covered by the rowdy/nuisance behaviour category would be provided by the Police.
- It was possible for the Police to target schools experiencing repeated instances of illegal parking, including, notably, Grove Wood Primary School, Rayleigh Primary School and Edward Francis Infant and Junior Schools; it was, however, essential that the Police be advised of the best days/times to target individual schools.
- The Committee would be provided, on a one-off basis, with details of how many of the recorded woundings were inflicted by knives within the West Area.
- All Neighbourhood Specialist Officers were based at Rochford Police Station. In the past when Officers were based at both Rayleigh and Rochford there were logistical difficulties in terms of vehicles being in the wrong place at the end of shifts and with respect to direct briefings.
- Traffic statistics were not included in the figures, as most road traffic accidents were not usually criminal offences; the only figures available relate to reducing the number of fatal/seriously injured incidents. It would be possible to provide KSI figures (killed or seriously injured), but these would be district-wide.
- Only a small minority of youths caused problems in the streets; the Neighbourhood Specialist Officer was exploring a number of possibilities to encourage youths not to congregate on the streets, including football matches, a skateboarding competition; there were, in addition, youth shelters in the vicinity of Websters Way Car Park.

### **(2) Update on Highways Matters within the Rawreth and Rayleigh Areas**

**(Note:** Cllr C I Black declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of living in Love Lane, Rayleigh)

The County Highways officer advised that an old Anglian Water brick culvert had totally collapsed over a 70 metre length in Crown Hill, down towards the station. Works to reinstate the system were due to start immediately, but would inevitably result in traffic delays. Anglian Water had advised that the works would take approximately 8 weeks to complete, but it was vital that all works be completed before the National Grid gas replacement works

commenced at the end of July. A programme of works commencing at 8.00 am until 8.00 pm, 7 days a week would be introduced with immediate effect, excluding Sunday, 15 June.

Traffic management would be involved, but it was anticipated that two lanes of traffic would be maintained, without the need for traffic signals. A narrow footway would be available on both sides of the road. A road crossing would be needed close to the station, which would take place over two nights.

The County Highways officer further advised that National Grid gas works were due to commence in Rayleigh High Street on 27 July, lasting approximately 4 weeks, but this could be longer. This would inevitably cause disruption and congestion. Works would be in operation from 7.00 am to 8.00 pm, 7 days a week. The Eastwood Road works should be finished by this time, but would be suspended for the duration of these High Street works. The High Street from Bellingham Lane would be closed, with access for deliveries and Emergency Services only; traffic would be able to travel up Bellingham Lane, as usual. The top of London Hill would become 2-way for the duration of the works.

It was noted that there would be manually operated traffic signals at the top of Websters Way, by the church. Bus changes would be indicated on the various bus stops affected; the High Street bus stop would move to Eastwood Road and become disabled parking for the duration of the works.

The Committee was advised that an information cabin had been situated in Websters Way car park, which would be manned between 10.00 am – 2.00 pm.

The County Highways officer confirmed that Countryside developers had requested the return of the Section 106 contribution they had made towards the costs of a pedestrian crossing at the top of Downhall Park Way, near Rawreth Lane. The contribution had been insufficient to provide the required pedestrian crossing. It was, however, noted that Asda had made a Section 106 contribution towards junction improvements in Rawreth Lane to facilitate crossing by bicycles, horses and pedestrians. There was ongoing discussion with the Cabinet Member for Transportation on how best to achieve the necessary improvements.

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- During the National Grid gas mains works, there will be no access to the High Street from Church Street, but the section of London Hill from Bellingham Lane to Church Street will become 2-way traffic.
- Parking restrictions in Little Wheatley Chase would be covered by the Locally Determined Programme (LDP). The Highways officer confirmed that Cllr Mrs Mockford would be advised outside the meeting as to whether

this was included in this year's LDP Programme.

- It was not necessary to repair the whole length of Crown Hill, just the collapsed area by the culvert.
- National Grid, as well as providing an information cabin in Websters Way car park, was visiting premises in the High Street providing information about the planned works.
- Letters would be delivered to residents informing them of the works in Crown Hill.
- A scheme had been developed to bring the unmade roads of Eastwood Rise, Rayleigh Avenue and Sandhill Road up to a standard that the County Council would be prepared to adopt. Proposals were due to go to the relevant Portfolio Holder imminently. Once the Portfolio Holder has agreed the proposals, any decision will be subject to a 14-day call-in period. A consultation will subsequently take place of local residents; it was possible that, subject to no problems arising, works could start at the end of the year.
- Cllr Mrs P Aves would be informed, after the meeting, of the timetable for the extension of double yellow lines in Trinity Road.
- Alternative bus stops would be placed at appropriate places in the High Street and clearly signposted, 'dolly' stops would also be placed in these alternative bus stop locations.
- There is no proposal to allow access from Crown Hill to Love Lane; this is unlikely to change in the future.
- Funds from the Locally Determined Programme that would normally be used on repairs and maintenance in the centre of Rayleigh would be allocated across the district, on a priority basis. Victoria Avenue would, however, be addressed during this year and a section of the footpath in Grove Road has already been completed.
- During the course of the culvert works in Crown Hill a 1-metre section of footpath would be maintained, which would be set back from the kerb; the situation would be closely monitored.
- The road surface in Church Road and Warwick Road would be examined, as there had been reports of pot holes, and repairs would be made, as necessary.

### 203 WEST AREA UPDATE

The Committee received the West Area update.

**07/07 – The Bridge on the Old Chelmsford Road (Minute 239/07)**

The proposal to install traffic lights on the bridge had not been endorsed by the Portfolio Holder as part of the A130 post bypass improvements. The scheme remains on the Locally Determined Programme, but a funding source has yet to be identified.

**25/07 – Improvements to the Wet Side Changing Rooms and Showers at Clements Hall Leisure Centre (Minute 340/07)**

Further information on the wet side changing facilities would be provided outside the meeting to Cllr P F A Webster.

**19/08 – Repairs to Broken Drain Cover in Hartford Close (Minute 130/08)**

It was noted that the repairs had been completed.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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**Question**

**Response**

G Wootton, Rayleigh

The road works in Eastwood Road have been going on for some months and are clearly both major and essential. However, on numerous occasions parts of the road have been coned off, and temporary traffic lights installed, when there is no repair activity taking place. Worse than that, there has been no equipment, no vehicles and no excavation, in the areas coned off. Can the Council establish why parts of perfectly good and empty road are coned off, and long tailbacks caused, at times when there is no apparent need to do so? What procedures does the Council have in place to ensure that disruption is minimised, within the obvious constraint that the work needs to be done?

Essex County Council was made aware of one incident when Eastwood Road was obstructed by Traffic Management relating to the gas works. This situation is not acceptable and was addressed with the company concerned with assurances from them that any traffic management would be removed when not relevant to the current works. County Council inspectors monitor the sites in Rayleigh constantly, which does include the weekends, as well as having regular liaison meetings. If any issues are identified by the travelling public, the County Council need to be advised so that they can be taken up with the company immediately.

M Nobes, Rayleigh

The residents of Rochford District have all heard of or read details regarding the substantial backlog in planning enforcement issues, some 400, across all categories, I believe. What is the department doing to take control of this backlog and will it even be able to handle this amount of investigations? Will the Council be looking at each enforcement issue and not take action against the more trivial, or will the department ensure that people or firms who have total disrespect for regulations be made to make amendments to the planning irregularities? The residents need to be assured that the department will not let anyone get away with these irregularities. Does the department have a plan to follow up all the issues?

The District Council is committed to investigating all complaints received about possible breaches of planning control. There are many different types of breaches of planning control – most are of a relatively minor nature, perhaps the omission of obscure glazing from a window, but others will have a significant impact on the amenities and well-being of the district's residents.

Breaches of planning control are categorised by their seriousness, with the most serious breaches being subject to immediate investigation. Minor breaches are all investigated, though our target for first investigation is 10 days.

**Question**

**Response**

When a complaint is received about an alleged breach of planning control, an initial investigation will be carried out to assess whether there is indeed a breach. In some instances there is no breach identified and the complainant will be informed of the details. Where a breach of planning control is identified, the Council has then to decide whether or not it is expedient to take action. A Planning Contraventions Notice will often be sent to the site owner requesting detailed information about the matter. The response received will then determine whether further action should be taken.

The current caseload comprises 13 category A cases, 31 category B cases and 364 Category C cases, this latter category comprising the low level cases that will all be investigated, but which have a lower priority for the enforcement team. In 2007/08, my department issued 24 enforcement notices, 55 planning contravention notices, 1 breach of condition notice, 1 permanent stop notice, 3 temporary stop notices and 1 listed building enforcement notice. Direct action was taken on two occasions in the year to clear unauthorised sites.

The statistics speak for themselves and reflect the high level of activity and commitment to investigate and pursue breaches of planning control. All breaches are investigated and pursued to a conclusion.

D Sperring, Rayleigh

While it is appreciated that at present growing conditions for grass are ideal, concern is being expressed by residents at the regularity. Can you confirm that this situation is being monitored?

Yes, weeds are sprayed by the new contractors, Connaught. Grass cutting continues to be regularly monitored by District Council staff.



## West Area Committee – 12 June 2008

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### Question

Also are any arrangements in hand to spray weeds that are growing in abundance in roads, kerbs and pathways?

D Sperring, Rayleigh

The garden of the Dutch Cottage seems to be becoming overgrown. Does RDC have any arrangements in hand to address this matter?

N Trippier, Rayleigh

With the new procedures for refuse collection, will there be any facility to pay for extra capacity, eg, an additional bin of the type required – as was formerly the case for green waste?

R Adams, Rayleigh

How many dwelling units (houses, flats, etc) were built in the District in 2006?

D Sperring, Rayleigh

Have County Highways agreed their programme of repairs / parking restrictions with RDC for the next year and when will this information be made available to Town / Parish Councils?

### Response

There are three sessions of weed spraying throughout the growing season, with the first spray having already been carried out. The weeds can take up to 3 weeks to show signs of die back.

Yes, this is part of the grounds maintenance contract with Connaught. Grass cutting will be carried out.

An update will be provided at the next meeting.

810 dwellings were built within the district between April 2001 and March 2006; figures are not available covering 2006 in isolation.

The maintenance programme is separate from that for repairs. County Highways have been avoiding conducting repairs to footpaths and road surfaces in Rayleigh, due to the gas works, which have involved a lot of digging up of road surfaces and pavements. Any ad hoc emergency repairs will, however, be carried out.

A report on the locally determined programme for 2008/09 including proposals for parking restrictions and improvements will be considered at a meeting of the Executive on 17 June.