

West Area Committee – 22 October 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the **West Area Committee** held on **22 October 2008** when there were present:-

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

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

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr M G B Starke

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr A Matthews	- Rawreth Parish Council
Cllr Mrs C Roe	- Rayleigh Town Council
Insp A Parkman	- Essex Police

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Fowler	- Head of Customer and Information Services
S Scrutton	- Head of Planning and Transportation
R Evans	- Head of Environmental Services
P McKenna	- Woodlands & Environmental Officer
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

295 AREA COMMITTEE – INITIAL BUSINESS

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs J Dillnutt, C J Lumley and Mrs J R Lumley.

Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

296 COMMUNITY FORUM

One question was raised during the Community Forum and a document summarising this and the response given is appended.

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

297 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 65 recorded incidents in September 2008, 53 in August 2008 and 65 in July 2008, compared to 87, 80 and 74 for the same months in 2007.

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 for the end of 2008 was set at 2485; across the District as of 26 September 2008 the cumulative total for incidents involving anti-social behaviour was 1199, compared to the cumulative target of 1219, ie, 1.6% under target.

It was noted that, with respect to the basket of crime statistics for Rawreth and Rayleigh, this year there were 59 reported incidents in September, 62 in August and 55 in July compared to 44, 46 and 57 in the same months respectively last year. There had clearly been an increase in basket of crime offences this year within the boundary of the West Area Committee; it was not, however, easy to determine the reasons behind this increase, which was not mirrored across the District as a whole.

Inspector Parkman indicated that the target set for reduction of basket of crimes across the District was 5% per annum; the cumulative figure as of today was 1624 reported offences, compared to the cumulative target of 1633, which was therefore 0.5% below target. There had been a steady reduction in crime across the Rochford District during the past 3 years; Insp Parkman indicated that he had been advised that Rochford was the safest District in the county.

In response to questions, Inspector Parkman advised that:-

- The woundings category covered a wide range of offences. In the year ending January 2008 there were 290 recorded offences within this category in the District, 251 of which related to actual bodily harm, and 5 of which related to offences with respect to carrying a bladed article in a public place.
- Serious offences, eg, murder, would not fall into the woundings category.
- It would not be appropriate to include these reported crime statistics on the Council website as the figures had not been officially verified.

- A lot of analysis of the statistics would be required in order to establish details of when offences were occurring in Sweyne Park ward, and whether these were at weekends or during weekdays. There was already a specific Police operation targeting anti-social behaviour, Operation Lark, which involved 2 additional Police officers on patrol in Rayleigh High Street every Friday and Saturday between 6.00 pm and 1.00 am. A similar operation has also been put in place in Rochford. These initiatives had been funded by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
- It was noted that Inspector Parkman would look at the specific crime statistics for the Sweyne Park ward in more detail and would liaise directly with Cllr Mrs J A Mockford on any findings.
- Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) had undertaken a door knocking operation in the vicinity of Grove Wood in order to try to scope the nature of the anti-social problem in that vicinity.
- In the week commencing 3 November 2008 there would be enforcement activity targeting bad car parking in the vicinity of Grove Wood Primary School, conducted in partnership by the Police, the County Council and Rochford District Council.
- Such enforcement activity would only be likely to have a short-term impact on illegal car parking; the long-term solution would be to make it impossible to park in a particular area, but this had cost implications for the County Council who consider environmental design changes against a scoring matrix to determine priorities for action.
- An update would be provided to the next meeting as to whether Police Community Support Officers had powers to issue parking tickets.
- Details would be provided to the next meeting of how many properties were visited by PCSO's in the Grove Wood area and whether leaflets were left at any of the properties visited.

The Head of Planning and Transportation advised that, with respect to illegal parking in the vicinity of schools, those drivers who parked illegally invariably drove off when parking wardens appeared. It was, however, anticipated that this problem might be addressed in the near future by the issuing of video cameras to wardens which would enable registration numbers of illegally parked cars to be recorded, followed by the issuing of parking tickets to offenders by post. In the meantime it was important to educate parents around the safety of children in the neighbourhood of the school.

- The Police would look into the issue of lorries parking at the junction of The Chase with Eastwood Road, and noted that this was particularly problematic around 7.00 am; Police did deal with parking issues, but there was always a balancing act involving time and resources.

- PC Wyn Sharp would be asked to contact Cllr Mrs J Carvalho with respect to dangerous and illegal car parking late at night in the vicinity of King George's Close/The Chase.
- In the run-up to Halloween posters had been sent out to shops asking them not to sell eggs and flour to youngsters. Posters had also been sent to the schools dealing with unacceptable behaviour at Halloween. There was no authorised annual leave for Police officers at Halloween; all officers were expected to be on duty. There would be high visibility patrols within the District, plain clothes officers would also be on duty with video cameras, who would call uniformed officers to deal with incidents. All youngsters who came to the attention of the Police last Halloween would receive a letter warning them not to take part in any anti-social activity. The front office at Rochford Police Station would be open until 10.00 pm on Halloween. A member of staff would monitor calls and would call back callers advising them of an approximate arrival time of a Police officer.

(2) Update on the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park

The Committee received an introduction from Cllr M G B Starke, the Portfolio Holder for the Environment, followed by a detailed update from the Council's Woodlands and Environmental Officer on the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park. The update was an opportunity to relay information on the Council's vision for the Country Park and receive the views of residents, final decisions on the way forward having yet to be made.

The update covered proposals for Phase 2 development over the next five years; final design and costing proposals would be considered by the Council's Executive in November. Emphasis was being placed on the provision of a sustainable and accessible environment. Specific reference was made to the planting and wildlife/habitat proposals suggested for each of the Park's areas and access considerations.

Responding to questions, the Woodlands and Environmental Officer advised that:-

- The changing climate had resulted in a change in the kinds of pests that affected the trees. Horse chestnuts, for example, were therefore showing signs of decline. It was, however, proposed to plant hardy native species within the extended park, including oak, ash, hornbeam and hazel.
- There were certain bridle paths that gave access to horses into the park, including ones at Flemings Farm and the Cherry Orchard link road underpass. There were no plans to include a bridle path in the area to the west of the park as there would be no existing bridle path that could link to that area. However, it was possible that an area could be created in the proposed car park for horse boxes which could enable horse owners to undertake a looped route within the park.

- All proposals relating to the extension of the park were subject to public consultation; every resident had the right to give their views to the Council on the proposals. During the first phase of the park's creation only one response to the public consultation had been received, to officers' knowledge, from a horse bridleways-related organisation.
- The proposal for cattle to graze on land at the park would be for organic, cattle, to be managed by an existing grazier, rather than by the District Council. It was proposed to create a grazing grassland in an area of stubble for the animals that would take approximately 3 years to establish. Furthermore, the proposal was for a very low density of cattle, only one per acre.

298 WEST AREA UPDATE

The Committee received the West Area update.

12/08 – Installation of New Benches at Sweyne Park (Minute 62/08)

It was noted that officers would clarify budgets relating to Sweyne Park and the District-wide open space refurbishment programme and provide details to Cllr R A Oatham outside the meeting.

21/08 – Lack of 'No Through Road' Signs in Wellington Road, Rayleigh (Minute 268/08)

It was noted that the sign would be erected within two weeks, ie, by 5 November 2008.

14/08 – Time Restrictions for Car Parking in Little Wheatley Chase (Minute 131/08)

It was anticipated that restrictions would be implemented by March 2009.

24/08 – Recent Positioning of 2 Victorian Street Lights on the Bridge at Battlesbridge (Minute 268/08)

It was noted that Rawreth Parish Council had not been consulted in advance of the street lights being installed. The Parish Council was disappointed that the lights had been installed without proper public consultation by the County Council.

23/08 – Extension of Double Yellow Lines in Trinity Road, Junction with Warwick Road, Rayleigh (Minute 268/08)

At this stage of the financial year the locally determined programme was underway and unfortunately there was no surplus funding available for additional work this year. This scheme would therefore be included on a schedule for consideration for the next financial year.

25/08 – Installation of Yellow Lines to Restrict Parking at the Corner of Trinity Road / Grove Road with Jubilee Road, Rayleigh (Minute 267/08)

It was noted that this scheme would, like 23/08 above, be included on a locally determined programme schedule for consideration for the next financial year.

It was noted that the District Ward Councillors had not yet been provided with an update on progress with respect to highways improvements to Rayleigh Avenue and Eastwood Rise.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Chairman

Date

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

Question

Response

A Buckle, Rayleigh

Why have so many dwellings been allocated to Rawreth under the Core Strategy?

This question will be carried forward to a meeting of The Executive on 25 November 2008, which will be considering the Rochford Core Strategy Preferred Options document.

There will, in the meantime, be extensive public consultation on the Core Strategy, commencing the first week in November. There will be a presentation by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation at each of the 3 Area Committees in November; the meetings will be open to all members of the public, who will be able to ask questions on the Core Strategy. There will be static exhibitions around the District, together with posters around the District and information on the Council website. In addition, there will be a special edition of *Rochford District Matters* delivered to every household within the District. There will be ample opportunity for residents to give their views on the Core Strategy.