

West Area Committee – 18 July 2007

Minutes of the meeting of the **West Area Committee** held on **18 July 2007** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J M Pullen

Cllr Mrs P Aves
Cllr C I Black
Cllr Mrs J Dillnutt
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 S P Smith
Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr P F A Webster

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Fowler	- Head of Information and Customer Services
S Scrutton	- Head of Planning and Transportation
F Laycock	- Senior Environmental Health Officer
M Power	- Committee Administrator
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr A Matthews	- Rawreth Parish Council
Cllr Miss P Weaver	- Rayleigh Parish Council
CI J Walker	- Essex Police
L Harvey	- County Highways

236 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the West Area Committee and outlined the emergency evacuation procedures. The Chairman stressed that the West Area Committee covered the areas of Rawreth and Rayleigh and the District Ward Members representing the wards within those areas were in attendance, together with representatives from the Town and Parish Councils.

The Chairman outlined the format of the agenda, highlighting that the community forum was intended for members of the public to ask any questions that they may have and reminding them that they should complete a question request sheet to list their questions.

237 AREA COMMITTEE – INITIAL BUSINESS

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr K A Gibbs.

Declarations of Interest

Cllr S P Smith declared a personal interest in item 5 of the agenda relating to the West Area Update, by virtue of his employment at Swayne Park School. Cllrs Mrs P Aves, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley, AJ Humphries, Mrs J A Mockford and JM Pullen each declared a personal interest in the same item by virtue of membership of Rayleigh Town Council.

Cllr A Matthews declared a personal interest in item 4(4) of the agenda relating to the Battlesbridge Conservation Area Appraisal by virtue of living within the Battlesbridge conservation area.

Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Cllr S P Smith was appointed Vice-Chairman of the West Area Committee.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the West Area Committee were noted.

238 COMMUNITY FORUM

Requests for information had been received in advance of the meeting and a document summarising these, together with officer responses was circulated to all those present.

Number 35 Bus Service

It was anticipated that the District Council would receive a response with respect to the future operation of the number 35 service, after a meeting organised by the Head of Passenger Transport at the County Council to discuss responses received from the public with respect to the operation of this service.

One Member observed that the number 35 was the only bus that went past Rayleigh Leisure Centre and further remarked that, given the number 20 bus runs every 20 minutes and is heavily used by residents, there could be merit in officers exploring with First the possibility of increasing the frequency of operation to every 15 minutes, with some buses going along Watery Lane and terminating at Bedloes Corner.

Rayleigh West Sewage Works

In response to concern raised about excessive lorry movements along Beeches Road and Watery Lane the County Highways officer advised that there was a 3 tonne weight limit on these roads, which was a legitimate route between Battlesbridge and Hullbridge. Monitoring of traffic movements along these roads had taken place, and it was clear that the route was being used as a cut through. The Community Police Officer, Steve Judd, had been given

the results of the monitoring and would be speaking to those companies whose lorries were using these roads in an effort to persuade them to use an alternative route. Signs would be enhanced at Hullbridge, signs would be moved closer to the edge of the road at Battlesbridge and there would be advance warnings at Rawreth Lane.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to Satellite Navigation systems routing vehicles along Beeches Road/Watery Lane, the County Highways officer advised that it was only local vehicles using the route and so this did not appear to be an issue of concern.

New Homes In Rayleigh

In response to a public question relating to the number of houses built to date during 2007, officers advised that NHBC and the District Council each monitored housing starts and completions and that the District Council employed a contractor to monitor the availability of housing land and to collate all data relating to houses that had been built. The next presentation of housing data would be in December covering the period up to the end of March 2007.

Officers confirmed, in response to a supplementary question relating to flats, that when a house was demolished and replaced with a number of flats, each individual flat counted as one dwelling, so there would accordingly be a net gain of units resulting from the demolition of a dwelling and its replacement by a number of flats.

Christmas Lights

Responding to an enquiry relating to the Christmas lights in Rayleigh, officers confirmed that the District Council had no objections to the road closure from Crown Hill to the end of the High Street from 3.00 – 7.15 pm. However, the formal process whereby County Council Highways carried out consultation still needed to be concluded and reported to the District for the formal Order to be made. In response to a supplementary question relating to the possibility of a passageway for buses through the closure, County Highways officers advised that this proposal would be considered, but was unlikely to be acceptable.

239 SPOTLIGHT ISSUES

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

Neighbourhood Action Panels

C I Walker advised that the Government had tasked the Police with setting up Neighbourhood Action Panels, (NAPs) as part of the community engagement strategy. There were 6 NAPs within the Rochford District, 1 of which was for Rayleigh and 1 for

Hullbridge/Rawreth. Meetings were held on a 6-weekly basis, with people invited to attend representing various areas of the community. The meetings identified areas in which the Police might take action, for example, roads, lighting, and an action plan was formulated and developed after each meeting.

Matters that had been raised by the Rayleigh NAP included:-

- Lack of toilets at night-time in Rayleigh – this issue had subsequently been resolved.
- Commuter parking – this issue had been resolved.
- Facilities for young people in Rayleigh – this would be an ongoing issue, with input from the Youth Service and the District Council and Town Council.
- Speeding, particularly in the Grove Road and London Road areas – the Police would liaise with County Highways to establish what monitoring had already been done in those areas. Speed guns would be deployed in these areas, plus a community speed watch scheme could be operated, involving members of the public being trained in the use of speed guns and using them in specific locations, with the ability to issue speeding tickets. It was noted that offenders caught speeding within an area were often local residents.

One Member observed that the commuter parking issue was unlikely to have been resolved, given that the only probable solution would be the installation of yellow lines and introduction of a 1-hour parking restriction. However, this was a slow process as residents in the affected roads needed to be consulted and often the results of such consultation were very mixed.

In conclusion, it was noted that the Police would provide feedback to the Area Committee on future NAP meetings.

Reported Crime – April to June 2007

A summary sheet of reported crime statistics for the Rayleigh District was circulated to all those present, a copy of which is appended to the Minutes. It was noted that there had been an overall reduction in crime in 2007 in comparison to the previous year. C I Walker confirmed that he would provide a breakdown of the crime statistics by ward, outside the meeting, if anyone required that information. The most common crime within the Rayleigh District (which included Rawreth) was that of criminal damage, which was also the most difficult to control, followed by that of theft from motor vehicles. The Rayleigh District was not a rife area for crime and continued to be a safe area.

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- There had been a reduction in crime of 15% in the Rochford District as a whole compared to the previous year and crime had reduced by 25% over the past 3 years. During the same period, there had been an increase in crime in Castle Point.
- There was one named Police Officer in Rayleigh, supported by a number of other officers. There was a neighbourhood policing team with 33 officers based in Rochford and a community support team in Rayleigh. There were 2 Community Support Officers in Rayleigh, who were highly visible and were proving successful at gaining useful intelligence in the prevention of crime.
- Although statistics were not available to show which crimes were alcohol-related, the Police kept records of anyone arrested while under the influence of alcohol.
- From September 2006 the Police had been running the Rayleigh Initiative, targeting the possession of alcohol by under-age youngsters, and had seized this from around 150 children in Rayleigh during this period. The children's parents were subsequently written to and the children entered on a Police-held register. Recently, the numbers of children carrying alcohol in the Rayleigh area had decreased considerably. The Police were working with Trading Standards and were carrying out a series of test purchases in order to establish whether any premises were selling alcohol to those under the legal age. It was clear that the initiative had a considerable impact on the reduction in crime in the area.
- Graham Nuth, the neighbourhood support officer for Rayleigh, should be contacted with respect to any expressions of interest relating to the setting up of a community speed watch scheme in Rayleigh.
- It was difficult to compare crime statistics, as people were more likely to report, for example, a burglary at their home than instances of criminal damage where it was more difficult to find any proof and where insurance cover was more limited.
- Police used intelligence gained by their neighbourhood police and community support teams to police areas where it was probable that an incident would take place, but it was impossible to stop all crime. The patrolling of areas by the Police did not necessarily reduce crime, but did serve to give reassurance to residents.
- CCTV footage could be useful in pursuing prosecutions, if the technology was modern. However, the difficulty with CCTV was that those committing crimes often tended to disguise themselves or wear

hooded garments to make identification virtually impossible from CCTV footage. However, if CCTV was monitored and a crime was detected, Police could be called to the scene and could take appropriate action.

- Members of the public should have confidence in reporting crime that they would be dealt with professionally and reports properly followed up. Since March 2007 the Rochford District had had a crime detection rate of almost 33% and was currently performing best out of any similarly sized district in Essex. It was noted that C I Walker would provide more details at the next meeting of this Area Committee.
- The Police did not have responsibility for the maintenance and monitoring of speed cameras and did not receive any speed camera data. C I Walker would, however, report to the relevant person that the speed cameras in London Road and Eastwood Road did not appear to be functioning properly.

(2) Update on Highways Matters within Rawreth and Rayleigh

A footway improvement programme was currently underway, with works being undertaken in London Road, Love Lane, Paddock Close, Grove Road and Shakespeare Avenue. Surface dressing work would be done in the summer in the London Road and Old Chelmsford Road, Rawreth. Major re-surfacing would be done during the school summer holiday at the Rawreth Lane/Hullbridge Road junction, in London Road, Rayleigh and at the 2 mini roundabouts in Hockley Road, Rayleigh.

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- The County Highways officer would provide an update on why there was a delay in adopting roads off the upper part of Victoria Avenue.
- The County Highways officer would ask for the flagstones in Rayleigh High Street to be inspected to see whether remedial action was required with respect to gaps between the flagstones.
- Works had been carried out on the bridge on the Old Chelmsford Road to raise the brick wall; this had caused visibility problems for vehicles travelling from the Chelmsford direction. A feasibility study was therefore being undertaken as to whether it might be possible to install traffic lights on the bridge.
- It was difficult to resolve the problem of motorists parking their cars onto grass verges, causing damage to kerbstones, other than taking their vehicle registration details and asking them to pay for the damage.

(3) Consultation on Tourism

Cllr Mrs M J Webster, Executive Board Member for Leisure, Tourism and Heritage, emphasised that the District Council wanted to attract more people into the District and was working hard to highlight the history of Rayleigh, with, for example, a series of events at the Windmill and open air Shakespeare and music at Rayleigh Mount. Residents were urged to get in touch with her to share any ideas they might have for events to help encourage more people into Rayleigh and Rawreth or to volunteer to help with events.

One Member observed that there was a real need for more people to volunteer as stewards at the Windmill, as this would enable its opening hours to be increased.

In response to questions the following was noted:-

- Work was being undertaken with respect to the District Council's tourism offer. Discussions were taking place with, for example, the RSPB and the Essex Naturalist Trust. A Trust had already been set up in partnership with the National Trust, to protect the Windmill, and the Council was hoping to license it for wedding ceremonies. The Council was working to develop its country parks and wildlife areas and wanted to make them more accessible to residents, but needed the involvement of partners and community groups to help achieve this. The District did not have adequate bed and breakfast facilities to accommodate bird watchers and would need to explore ways of achieving this.
- The Rochford District Council website included a live web cam from the top of the Windmill carrying aerial photographs across the district and one from Wallasea Island. It was possible for residents to pay bills online and to e-mail Councillors via the website and there was also a form on the website for residents to e-mail any questions they might want raised at future Area Committee meetings. Work was constantly being conducted to develop the website and trying to make it easier for the public to use and the Council would welcome any feedback on the website.
- The District Council would be happy to work closely with the Town Council with respect to possible improvements to the Rayleigh website.
- A budget had now been allocated for building the display cabinets for the Windmill, but it was not yet known when these would be made, given that guidance would first be needed from the County Museums Service. An update would be provided at the next meeting.

(4) Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans: Battlesbridge

The draft Conservation Area appraisal and management plan for Battlesbridge was unique in that it had been jointly prepared with Chelmsford Borough Council, since the Conservation Area straddled the boundary between the two districts.

Members observed that great care had been taken with the appraisal and that Battlesbridge attracted more tourists from greater distances than any other area within the District.

There was a general consensus that advertising was a sensitive issue as signs could detract greatly from the appearance of the Conservation Area. Highways signs, in particular, did little to enhance the Conservation Area. It was also stressed that at the weekends signs were placed on the footpaths, creating a hazard. The view was expressed that there should be some form of standardisation for advertising signs and that the number of signs should be controlled, particularly on highways land.

Attention was drawn to the lack of co-ordination between the two Local Authorities with respect to the 2 different sides of the river generally and that the Councils applied planning legislation relating to Conservation Areas separately on each side of the river. It was felt that there would be merit in officers exploring with Chelmsford Borough Council the possibility of establishing a joint Committee for the Battlesbridge Conservation Area.

The importance of trying to re-open the sea wall between Battlesbridge and Hullbridge to walkers was emphasised as this had been denied to residents for many years and would help attract more tourists to the area. Currently walkers wishing to walk into Battlesbridge from Hullbridge had to do so via Beeches Road.

240 WEST AREA UPDATE

The Committee noted the report of the Head of Information and Customer Services providing information on some items of local interests.

241 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD/ISSUES TO REFER TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Members concurred that the following items should be referred to the Executive Board:-

Air Quality

Additional air quality monitoring at the Love Lane/High Street/Castle Road

junction, given its proximity to Love Lane School and the congestion at the junction.

Sweyne Park Improvements / Sports Pitches

Clarification should be sought with respect to the budget for Sweyne Park to gauge what funds were allocated for improvements to the park and what funds were allocated for the work to pitches. It was felt that work on Sweyne Park sports pitches should be expedited. Had consultation been held with local football clubs to ascertain pitch need and was the Council applying for grants to develop sports pitches in areas of need?

Housing

In response to a request to refer an item relating to funding for the infrastructure associated with any new housing proposed for Rayleigh, officers advised that the Core Strategy was still at an early stage, but would be considered at a future meeting of the Area Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

Chairman

Date

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Neighbourhood Action Panels: Identified Issues

RAYLEIGH

- **FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**
- **SPEEDING IN GROVE ROAD AND LONDON ROAD AREAS**

Resolved issues:

Lack of toilets

Commuter parking

Updated 18/07/2007

Reported Crime - Rayleigh District April – June 2007

Basket of Crimes		2007		TOTAL	2006
REPORTED OFFENCE	APRIL	MAY	JUNE		April - June
Burglary	2	2	3	7	6
Common Assault	10	4	2	16	13
Criminal Damage	34	17	29	80	120
Robbery	0	0	0	0	2
TFMV	20	12	16	48	37
Theft from the Person	1	2	2	5	1
Theft of Pedal Cycles	0	1	4	5	5
TOMV	11	3	6	20	23
Vehicle Interference	0	2	0	2	2
Woundings	10	9	10	29	32
Grand Total 2007	88	52	72	212	
Grand Total 2006	103	58	80	241	