

Minutes of a Meeting of the North Warwickshire Area Committee held on 21 March 2007 at the Coleshill Town Hall, High Street, Coleshill

Present: -

Members of the Committee

Councillors Ray Sweet (Chair)
Peter Fowler
Colin Hayfield
Joan Lea
Brian Moss
Mick Stanley

Officers Ian Balmer, Extended Services Development Officer
Bill Basra, Corporate Partnerships Officer
Roger Bennett, Team Leader Strategic Projects
Chris Burrows, Minor Works Programme Manager
Ann Mawdsley, Senior Committee Administrator
Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Martin Poole, Community Safety Manager North
Roger Poole, Policy Engineer
Joanne Roberts, Administrative Officer North Warwickshire
Mark Rose, Watch Manager, Community Protection
Peter Samwell, County Highways Project Manager
Diana Spragg, Area Manager for Early Years and Childcare
North Warwickshire District
Sian Stroud, Senior Solicitor
Kate Wilding, Participation Youth Worker
Lee White, Project Manager Major Public Transport Schemes
Alison Williams, Area Manager North Warwickshire
Estyn Williams, Group Manager Road Safety Unit

Also in Attendance 26 Members of the Public attended.

1. General

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the process for public questions and added that the three public questions being considered at the meeting had been received more than five working days before the meeting.

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Julia Brook, Head of Rural and Management Services and Councillors Anne Forwood and Richard Grant.

(2) Members' Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as set out below:

- (1) by virtue of them serving as North Warwickshire Borough Councillors as follows:-

Councillors Peter Fowler, Colin Hayfield, Joan Lea, Brian Moss, Mick Stanley and Ray Sweet.

- (2) Councillor Colin Hayfield declared a personal interest in Item 13 as a Non-Executive Director of the NHS Warwickshire.

(3) Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 January 2007 and Matters Arising

The minutes of the North Warwickshire Area Committee meeting held on 24 January 2007 were agreed as a correct record with the following correction:

Page 2 – Matters Arising 1. Page 2-2. Public Question Time

Mr Paul Read to be replaced with Mr Paul Reader.

Matters Arising

None.

2. Public Question Time

(1) Question from Mr Paul Reader, resident of New Arley and member of New Arley Parish Council

“Following complaints I have received from several residents regarding the traffic congestion and other problems caused by HGV traffic movement through New Arley in the vicinity of Gun Hill and Frederick Road, especially those vehicles travelling through the village to Arley Industrial Estate.

Could the Area Committee be asked to support improved signage for such vehicles in the short term and an investigation into possible improvements to the low height rail bridge on Station Road to enable such large vehicle to gain direct access to the industrial estate from the Tamworth Road (B4098) so as to prevent the need for such vehicles to traverse through the less suitable roads in New and Old Arley respectively and those of other surrounding villages.

I would like to remind the Area Committee that the rail bridge adjacent to the industrial estate on Spring Hill was remodelled in the early 1990's which increased headroom underneath and in recent years the relocation of Silver Knight/Mice Exhibitions Ltd and other companies to Arley Industrial Estate have significantly increased the number of HGVs / Commercial vehicles on the local road network. “

WCC Response (Steve O'Connor, Section Engineer, Bridge Maintenance) provided prior to the meeting:

"There are 3 rail bridges in the Arley area. All 3 are owned and maintained by Network Rail.

The C12/06 Colliery Hill Bridge (428332, 289869) was modified in the early 90s with the incorporation of a concrete portal which improved the headroom above the road.

I have asked Network Rail if there are any proposals for similar works to the two bridges to the south west of this one. They are checking at present but feel that this would be unlikely as if there was need for work it could have been done at the same time as the other bridge using the same rail possessions. If the County Council wished to carry out works to the bridges at its own expense, this would be extremely costly assuming Network Rail approval could be obtained.

I understand that Traffic Section are looking into the issue of improving signage in the area.

3. Verbal Update from Young People

Kate Wilding apologised that no young people had been able to attend the meeting. She tabled a handout and gave the Committee an update on the Youth Opportunity Fund.

The Chair thanked Kate Wilding and the young people in North Warwickshire for the excellent work they had done with the Youth Opportunity Fund.

4. Gorse Green Lane, Fillongley – Heavy Goods Vehicles

(Public Question 2) - Question received from Ms Fiona Barrington-Ward, acting on behalf of Mr Peare, Green End

"Why won't Warwickshire County Council put a weight restriction on Gorse Green Lane Fillongley?"

Ms Fiona Barrington-Ward noted that the heavy use of the road was causing her client and other local residents considerable stress. She showed the Committee a number of photographs showing damage caused by vehicles using Gorse Lane and suggested Members have a site visit.

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy discussing the background to the requests received for an Amenity Weight Limit on Gorse Green Lane and the County Council's policy on weight limits and recommending that the request for a weight limit is not pursued.

Roger Bennett noted that County Council policy was to consider weight restrictions as a last resort only, where there were significant numbers of goods vehicles using a road as a through route. He added that most of the vehicles using Gorsey Green Lane were accessing the poultry units on that road and would normally have access exemption from any weight restrictions.

During the following discussion, the following points were raised:

1. Members noted that this issue had been ongoing for a number of years, particularly in respect to the use of the poultry farm and the HGVs accessing it.
2. There was general concern at the large number of narrow lanes in North Warwickshire and the damage that was caused when these were used by large agricultural and commercial vehicles and the frustration and difficulties this caused to local residents across the area.
3. Members agreed that the photographs conveyed the information as well as any site visit could and all had similar lanes in their own divisions with similar problems.
4. While Members agreed that an Amenity Weight Limit on Gorsey Green Lane not be pursued, the Council should in the future look for strategies to put in place such as demarcations on narrow roads.

Resolved:

That the request for an Amenity Weight Limit on Gorsey Green Lane is not pursued.

5. Selection of a Local Scrutiny Area in North Warwickshire

Jane Pollard gave a verbal update on the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group. The Group had agreed that the topics that are suitable for taking forward at this time as local area scrutiny exercises for North Warwickshire were:

- (a) Underperformance of educational achievement and skill levels of young people at age 16 in North Warwickshire **OR**
- (b) Youth activities across North Warwickshire

She added that once the Area Committee had selected a topic they needed to nominate Members to the Panel, excluding Portfolio Holders.

Resolved:

That the membership of the Panel would be Councillors Forwood, Grant, Lea, Moss, Stanley and Sweet, and that Councillors Fowler and Hayfield would be welcome to attend meetings of the Panel.

6. Review of North Warwickshire Area Business Plan 2005/06

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development considering the County Council's performance and proposed actions on 'Improve the Environment',

'Reduce Crime and Improve the Safety of the Community' and 'Ensure Sound Governance of the County Council to provide Accessible, Responsive and Well-Managed Services'.

During the following discussion, the following points were raised:

1. Lee White reported that the Coleshill Parkway bus service was now running with a bus every 15 minutes to the station site and Birmingham Airport. Building was complete on the station and all defects had been identified to the contractor and an open date would soon be identified.
2. The work being done to replace the current Grendon recycling centre was moving forward through the identification of alternative sites and the Chair thanked everyone for the support given to the people in Grendon on this issue.
3. Estyn Williams agreed to revert to Members of the Committee on whether the School Travel Plans had been effective.
4. It was agreed that Dave Potter would be asked to e-mail Members on the emphasis placed by Ofsted on sustainable and environmental issues and whether a broader focus would make it easier for schools to deal with problems such as travelling to school and parking.
5. It was agreed that traffic calming measures within villages was an issue that should be looked at by the Village Traffic Officer once in post.
6. Mark Rose updated Members on the initiatives undertaken as part of the year 2 IRMP Action Plan. The Committee congratulated the Service for the excellent work that had been done.
7. It was agreed that there was still work to be done in terms of the referral process for identifying people at risk and that links needed to be made with the new PHILLIS Service.

Resolved:

That the North Warwickshire Area Committee notes the Performance Report for 2005-06 in respect of 'Improve the Environment', 'Reduce Crime and Improve the Safety of the Community' and 'Ensure Sound Governance of the County Council to provide Accessible, Responsive and Well-Managed Services'.

7. Implications of the Childcare Act 2006 and development of Children's Centres

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families outlining the duties imposed on Local Authorities by the Childcare Act 2006 and gives information on the developments within North Warwickshire to meet them. Diana Spragg added that Council was well on track to deliver the two main duties under the Childcare Act 2006, which were:

1. outcomes - to close the gap and reduce inequalities; and
2. sufficiency – to ensure sufficient and suitable childcare and to meet the needs of parents.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- a. The Local Authority had a duty under the Act to work with private and voluntary providers and this had always been done in Warwickshire.
- b. There was a need to work with the provision that already existed and to join services together.
- c. There would be an opportunity for Member input in the form of Steering Groups and Diana Spragg agreed to liaise with Alison Williams on this issue.

Resolved:

That the Area Committee acknowledges the duties imposed on the Warwickshire County Council by the Childcare Act 2006 and supports the work in progress to meet them.

8. Extended Services Update Report

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families summarising developments in the extended services strategy for Warwickshire and a specific update upon activity in North Warwickshire.

Ian Balmer made the following points:

- i. The Service worked closely with the Early Years Service in dovetailing provision.
- ii. Extended Services was a large agenda bringing services and capabilities together to offer a maximised core offer of services that parents and communities would welcome.
- iii. There were a number of schools that were already core compliant and schools were being encouraged to work in clusters and to appoint cluster co-ordinators to move the agenda forward.
- iv. The Service was well on its way to meeting the 2008 target set by Government.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- 1. All schools were enthusiastic about Extended Services, which had a child-centred agenda and were making core offers either through their own services or through signposting. It was important that evidence of this was highlighted in reporting to Government.
- 2. Training was being offered to schools and potential partners in the form of three-day blocks covering how to meet the terms of the offer, signposting and joining services up.

Resolved:

That the Area Committee considers the progress to date of the Extended Services strategy in North Warwickshire.

9. Capital Programme for Transport 2007-08

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy setting out the draft 2007/08 Capital Programme for Integrated Transport for the North Warwickshire area.

During the following discussion, the following points were raised:

1. It was agreed that the new footway for Edge Hill, Wood End would be considered by the new Village Traffic Officer at a later date.
2. Lee White agreed to revert to Councillor Fowler with details of what had happened to the funding put aside at an earlier date for work at Dorris Road, Coleshill North.

Resolved:

That Members:-

1. Support the Capital Programme for Integrated Transport for North Warwickshire Area given in Table 1.
2. Agree to receive further details on schemes in Arley, Grendon and Atherstone at the next Area Committee meeting.
1. Agree that schemes listed in Table 4 be removed from the list of requests together with those schemes that have remained on the list for three years or more.

10. Hams Lane, Lea Marston – Outcome of Public Consultation

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy detailing the results of a public consultation following the approach made by Lea Marston Parish Council.

Lee White reported that there had been concerns regarding speed and volume of traffic in Lea Marston for many years during which time many different options had been looked at. He noted that a public consultation had taken place at the end of 2006 in the form of a postal survey and of the approximately 126 responses received, 70% had concluded there were traffic problems, 62% were against the closure of Hams Lane and 38% were in favour of the closure of Hams Lane. He added that the Highways Agency, Fire Service and Police were all concerned at the impact if Hams Lane were to be closed.

During the following discussion, the following points were raised:

1. Tribute was paid to members of the Parish Council in their dealing with the issue and the work they had put in, together with the officers to fully explore all options to help the village.
2. It was agreed that this was an issue that the Village Traffic Officer could revisit once in position.

Resolved:

That the Area Committee does not support the proposal of Lea Marston Parish Council to close Hams Lane.

11. Highway Maintenance Plan 2007/08 and Five Year List of Structural Maintenance Schemes

(Public Question 3) - Question from Mr Paul Reader, resident of New Arley and member of New Arley Parish Council

“Would the Area Committee support residents calls for improvements to the maintenance of the basic infrastructure of Arley?”

Road surfaces are in dreadful state, pavements patched by the bitumen coating, kerbsides eroding enabling weeds to flourish, many lamp-posts rust covered, bent over or defective. Road-signage damaged or defaced. Many streets looking un-swept for months, drainage hoppers silted to the rim. Little provision by the way of Community Facilities.

We pay similar levels of Council Tax to those in the more affluent parts of the County (probably more in terms of percentage of household income) but appear to receive poor value for or money.

Arley hasn't become run-down overnight but the neglect by Public Authorities of the last 30+ years is now becoming more apparent.

Could the Area Committee investigate spending levels on maintenance of the basic infrastructure here in North Warwickshire especially areas such as Arley compared to other areas of the County?”

Response from Roger Poole, Environment and Economy Directorate:

“Spending on routine maintenance is maintained at approximately the same level over the whole County (WCC). Gullies are emptied annually and Arleys are next due to be emptied in June. All roads are inspected on a programmed cycle and dangerous defects repaired immediately. When last inspected they were found to be in a satisfactory condition. Responsibility for sweeping lies with North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC). However, at the end of November 2006, WCC, NWBC and Warwickshire Police spent a week working together on a Focus on New Arley initiative. As a result, work was undertaken to remove graffiti, fly tipping, reinstate road markings and clear overgrown paths etc.

Street lighting columns on Spring Hill, Gunn Hill and Colliers Way have recently been structurally tested resulting in the imminent replacement of five columns. A scheme to upgrade the lighting in the vicinity of Rowland Court is about to begin and these columns will be painted during the 07/08 financial year.”

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy providing information about highway

maintenance work proposed in 2007/08 and listing other sites where maintenance work would be required in the future.

During the following discussion, the following points were raised:

1. The Chair reported that there had been a report to the Council on potholes and that members of the public could report potholes to the County Council and issues such as roads needing sweeping to the Borough Council. He thanked Mr Reader for bringing his concerns to the attention of the Area Committee and added that officers would look into the matter.
2. Spend on highways was equal across the County, but in setting the budget there were many competing priorities, the biggest of which was Adult Social Services.

Resolved:

That the Area Committee informs Cabinet of Members' views.

12. Speed Management Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy inviting the views of the Area Committee on the draft report of a Speed Management Strategy for the County and related matters.

Estyn Williams noted that following a seminar in September 2006, a report had gone to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2007, who had forwarded the report to all Area Committees and the Police for their input. He added that speed limits were only a part of the strategy and there were other issues such as educating drivers to be considered.

During the following discussion, the following points were raised:

1. Members acknowledged that the need for speed management was common to all divisions of the County and the reduction of speed in North Warwickshire would be included in the remit of the Village Traffic Officer.
2. There was a need for schemes to be flexible and timely in order to address local issues.
3. Enforcing speed limits remained a frustrating problem.
4. There was a need to look at initiatives on speed awareness and management taking place across the country.
5. There were a number of cost effective, simple measures such as signage and placing of signs a good distance before and after villages that could be taken.
6. It was suggested that a speed limit be imposed of 20 miles per hour outside all schools in Warwickshire to ensure the safety of children and lollipop ladies.
7. Educating drivers needed to be a priority.

Resolved:

That the comments made by the North Warwickshire Area Committee on the draft Speed Management Strategy be submitted to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

13. North Warwickshire Well-Being Fund 2006/07

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development giving details of the Well-Being Fund Commissions for decision.

It was noted that where applications were not successful, such as the Gun Hill Allotments Association, that every effort was made to assist these projects to seek alternative funding.

Resolved:

That the Area Committee:

1. Approve Well-Being Fund Commissions for:
 - i) Sloppy Slipper Project - £800
 - ii) Alcohol Awareness Training - £500 to support the training of 10 individuals from voluntary and community agencies only
 - iii) Common Purpose Your Turn Programme - £5,000
2. Does not support the Well-Being Fund Commission for Gun Hill Allotments Association but allocates £1,000 to assist with the strategic development and management of Allotments across North Warwickshire, in particular the establishment of a North Warwickshire Allotment Consortium, as detailed in the North Warwickshire Council Allotments Action Plan.

14. North Warwickshire Social Inclusion Fund 2006/07

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development giving details of a Social Inclusion project for decision and to note the progress of previous allocations.

Resolved:

That the Area Committee:

- 1) Note the end of project report for the 'Building Respect' Event.
- 2) Note the mid-term report for the 'Co-ordination, sharing and application of intelligence on nuisance and anti-social behaviour' project and continue to support the post of Nuisance Co-ordinator to the value of £13,000 in 2007/08.
- 3) Approve the use of remaining Social Inclusion Funding for 2006/07 of £4,975 to establish a Small Grants Scheme to support the delivery of the Community Development Worker (North Warwickshire) Project.

15. Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Committee agreed the provisional items identified for future meetings, including those extra items agreed above.

16. Any Other Items

The Chair welcomed Bill Basra to the meeting and to North Warwickshire and noted that he would be taking over from Alison Williams during her maternity leave.

Date of next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 23 May 2007 at the Fillongley Village Hall, Coventry Road, Fillongley.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 7.55 p.m.