

The **RUGBY AREA COMMITTEE** met at the **TOWN HALL, RUGBY** on the **9th NOVEMBER 2005**.

Present:-

Councillor John Vereker (Chair)

“ Heather Timms (Vice Chair)

“ Gordon Collett

“ Richard Dodd

“ Katherine King

“ Brian Levy

“ Philip Morris-Jones

“ Jerry Roodhouse

“ Ian Smith

“ John Wells

Officers:-

Phil Astle, Education Officer (School Organisation)

Nick Darwen, Area Manager

Peter Endall, Principal Solicitor

Nigel Exell, Demographic & Statistics Officer (Schools Organisation)

Kevin Gardner, Assistant Divisional Fire Officer

Neil Gulliver, Principal Committee Administrator

Adrian Hart, Senior Transport Planner, Dept of Planning, Transport & Economic Strategy

Tom Hook, Community Partnership Officer

Ian McLean, Rugby Area Community Education Officer

Roger Newham, Acting Head of Transport Planning Unit, Dept of Planning, Transport & Economic Strategy

Peter Sutton, Head of the Adult and Community Learning Service

Diane Vicary, Chief Inspector (attended for agenda item 2)

Claire Wildsmith, Area Administrative Officer

7 members of the public.

1. General

1. Apologies

were received from Councillors Tom Cavanagh and Brian Levy.

2. Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillors Gordon Collett, Richard Dodd, Jerry Roodhouse and Heather Timms declared personal interests in any issue raised at the meeting affecting Rugby Borough Council of which they were Members.

Councillor Roodhouse declared a personal interest in Agenda item 4 through his involvement with Age Concern.

Councillor Katherine King declared a personal interest in Agenda item 6 as a Governor of Avon Valley School.

Councillor Timms declared a personal interest in Agenda item 6 for family reasons.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 14th September 2005 and Matters Arising

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the meeting of the Rugby Area Committee held on the 14th September 2005 be approved and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

2. Public Question Time

1. Question from Mrs Carter

A. Road and Footpath Conditions

There have been two patches of tarmac put down on the footpath between the Wharf and the Revell Prison Training College. What is intended to happen with the rest of the path, which is not even 12 inches wide in some places, has this been earmarked for work in the next financial year?

Also, further to the question that I submitted to the September Rugby Area Committee, I wish to highlight that there is still an issue with the drain on Smeaton Lane. The drain floods terribly, in part, due to soil falling into it from the bank behind it and also due to tree roots which continue to block it. Could something be done in order to prevent the soil falling into it and also to clear the tree roots?

Response from Paul Cowley, Department of Planning, Transport & Economic Strategy

With regard to the footpath between the Wharf and Newbold Revell, I cannot really add anything to the letter I sent to Mrs Carter on 26th October, in which I confirm that I have instructed Chris Lucas, the Area Surveyor, to investigate the condition of the footpath and arrange any necessary repairs. Whether or not more formal construction work can be carried out remains a matter of resources.

With regard to the drain in Smeaton Lane, Mrs Carter is right when she says that there is still an issue here. The drain has been cleared on previous occasions but with its location soil and debris do block the grid. A retaining area will be created to keep the drain clearer from the debris thus improving the situation.

B. Road Signage

One sign on the B4455 has recently been changed to have a yellow backing. Could the give way signs also be changed in a similar way?

Response from Paul Cowley, Department of Planning, Transport & Economic Strategy

The signage issue with yellow backing to Give Way signs on the Fosse Way needs to be investigated further with our Traffic Group. I am therefore not able to give a more comprehensive answer at this stage.

C. Robberies

Could I request an update on the Police matter which Cllr Vereker has been investigating further.

Response from Chief Inspector Diane Vicary

I feel it is important to go back to the beginning on this and to clarify the difference between 'Robbery' and 'Burglary'. The legal definition of a 'robbery' requires there to have been an element of violence employed. The incidents in question did not involve violence and were therefore strictly burglaries rather than robberies. There are certain categories of burglary where the police have made a reasoned decision that they should not attend, for example, where a key has been scraped down the side of your car, whether parked on your drive or elsewhere. This is because there would be no evidential value to an officer attending personally. The incident in question, the burglary of an outbuilding, fell into this category and the Police obtained necessary information over the telephone. By contrast burglaries of houses would be attended every time. I hope that this goes some way to clarify matters.

2. Question from Mrs Hunter – Market Harborough

- A. I would like to ask whether the County Council is aware of the increasingly dangerous traffic conditions on the B4112 Rugby to Pailton Road, particularly at the point where the road crosses the North Oxford Canal between Newbold and Harborough Magna?

There are easily 9 identifiable hazards within an approximate 250m stretch of the road, contributing to these are the issues of the road having restricted visibility and that only the national speed limit applies. There have been a series of accidents over the last few years on or near the narrow bridge culminating in a recent fatality. Daily observation suggests that high speed tailgating and inappropriate overtaking have become the norm and these coupled with the steady increase in volume of traffic pose a major issue in respect of road safety.

There also seems to be an increasing lack of regard for the existing road signs and markings, the national speed limit and the existence and needs of other road users. I feel that there is a particular danger to cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders who use the road.

With the further development of Magna Park and the extension of Swift Valley Business Park, the increase in freight vehicles including the very large trans-continental double trailers, has been rapid and significant. This would seem to have been added to by the increasing use of satellite navigation systems.

Given the above, will the County Council please take note of this very serious traffic hazard and consider some remedial works to road signs and markings to increase drivers' awareness of hazards?

I would like to suggest double-white lines, or at least a continuous white line, between the 2 bends either side of the bridge with clear 'no overtaking' signs governing the narrow bridge itself due to there being a hidden dip/summit, flashing "too fast" signs could also be considered. Could I also ask that a 50mph limit be considered for introduction between the 30mph and 40mph limits of Newbold and Harborough Magna?

- B. Furthermore, with regard to the Freight Quality Partnership, would the Council recognise the likely future impact of the Northern section of the Rugby Western Relief Road and give consideration to the suitability of the B4112 for use by large freight vehicles, in particular the series of bends past St Botolphs Church in Newbold, the narrow canal bridge, the sharp bend by the Old Lion Pub in Harborough and the already recognised conditions in Pailton?

Response provided by Carolyn Burrows, Department of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy

The section of road between Newbold on Avon and Harborough Magna is essentially rural, with one of two residential properties located at the point where the route crosses the Oxford Canal. At this point the road narrows slightly and rises uphill over the bridge. On both approaches to the canal bridge there are existing signs warning of the road narrowing, together with 'Reduce Speed Now' signs and 'Slow' road markings. The carriageway is in good condition and has clear hazard lines in good condition.

The recent accident at the canal bridge has been investigated by the Safety Engineering Team and the police; there was no evidence that the road environment contributed to the collision. However, until the full Coroners report is available, no further comments can be made regarding this incident.

The introduction of continuous white lining systems are only necessary where forward visibility is severely restricted. The Harborough Magna bound approach to the bridge has reduced visibility ahead, but not so restrictive as to require continuous white lining.

The introduction of more signage, or lining, given that there have only been three collisions on this stretch of road within the last three years, would have no benefit in terms of casualty reduction. If drivers are careful and courteous to other road users, as is evident from the accident data, there is no need to keep reminding them of potential hazards. In fact, adding more signage and markings to the road environment may be detrimental to road safety, as drivers can be distracted by unnecessary sign clutter.

With limited funding available for safety engineering, the County Council's policy is aimed at reducing the number of people killed or injured on Warwickshire's roads. Priority is given to treating sites where there have been a number of recent collisions in which people have been injured, often due to excessive speed.

The B4112 is governed by the national speed limit for rural roads of 60mph. This is a maximum speed at which vehicles should be travelling. The road environment plays a key part in determining the appropriate speed limit for a road. Drivers tend to drive at the speed at which the road environment indicates to them that it is safe to travel at.

The policy of Warwickshire County Council and Warwickshire Police is to use the Department of Transport's (DfT) guidelines in deciding whether to introduce any speed limits lower than the national speed limits on the County's roads.

The DfT guidelines explain that it is futile to introduce a speed limit unless there is strong evidence that most drivers will comply with it. If the speed at which most people instinctively drive is significantly higher than the proposed limit, then without engineering measures being introduced to lower average speeds, the limit is likely to be largely ignored. Our own assessments of the B4112 have found the speed which most drivers perceive to be reasonable is higher than the limit you suggest, and would therefore be contrary to County Council policy.

There would be little benefit in introducing such a limit, which would simply be ignored as soon as enforcement ceased, the Police who have limited resources have previously found such limits ineffective.

In the case of the B4112, there is little change for the driver to observe and therefore any reduction in the speed may not be effective. For changes to speed limits outside the built up areas and on rural roads, the County Council is at present waiting for the publication of new guidelines for speed limits from the Department for Transport. When these are available, the County Council's speed limit policy will be reevaluated to ensure that it is consistent with the recommended national approach to speed limits.

3. Rugby Area Business Plan – Half Year Performance Report

The report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive was considered.

Following introductory comments by Nick Darwen, the following comments/issues were highlighted:-

- Serious concerns were expressed about the lack of progress in targeting youth work programmes to support the transition from childhood to adulthood. Members were made aware that there had been problems with appointing part-time staff although this was now being resolved. Councillor Roodhouse however asked that the Committee should be provided with further information on the level of resources required to ensure that the targets set in this area are achieved. It was also agreed that the need for additional resources to be made available for youth provision should be brought to the attention of Cabinet.

- Ian McLean acknowledged Councillor Collett's concerns about the running of Dunchurch Youth Centre and assured him that the current problems were being addressed.
- Nick Darwen agreed to liaise with departments to provide further information on areas where performance appeared weak, including the provision of consumer events in Benn Ward, the moped loan scheme (wheels to work) and school non-attendance.
- Councillor Morris-Jones requested further information on the success of the Vital Villages Programme which would shortly end and whether there were any proposals to continue this provision. Roger Newham agreed to report back to a future meeting.

4. Rugby Community Development Fund 2005/06 (Funding Sub-Group Recommendations)

The report by the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive was considered.

In response to comments from Councillor Morris-Jones about the lack of projects within rural communities, Nick Darwen pointed out that only 1 application had been received from the rural area despite every effort to publicise the Fund amongst the Parish Councils. Councillor Collett added that, if Borough and County Council grants were looked at together, it was likely that the rural areas of Rugby were receiving a fair share of the available funding.

Several members commented on the problems caused by the August deadline for applications and agreed that the County Council should be recommended to put the deadline back to the end of September.

It was then Resolved:-

1. That approval be given to the recommendations of the Funding Sub-Group as detailed in the County Solicitor's report.
2. That the County Council be recommended to put the deadline for applications to the Community Development Fund back to the end of September each year, or another suitable date that did not fall within the summer holiday period.

5. Rugby Area Community Education Annual Report – October 2005

The report by the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive was considered.

Resolved:-

That the progress report of Youth & Community and Adult Community Learning Services in Rugby Borough be endorsed.

6. Draft School Organisation Framework 2005/10

The report by the County Education Officer was considered.

After Phil Astle had introduced the report, a lengthy debate ensued during which the following issues were highlighted:-

- Councillor Collett expressed serious concerns about the problems faced at Cawston being repeated if insufficient school places are made available in response to the proposed new housing developments in the Rugby area. He felt that it was imperative that the Framework was completely reviewed and discussions held with all schools before any decision was taken on future school place numbers.
- Councillor King requested further information on how the concept of extended schools would be developed in the Rugby area.
- Councillor Roodhouse suggested that a clear message should be sent to Cabinet to take a good hard look at future education provision in Warwickshire. He added that any new proposals should be put on hold until the new County Council officer structure was in place and should be informed by a wider context including extended schools.
- There was general concern amongst members regarding the future of small schools.

Phil Astle responded to the debate by confirming that the County Council had no intention of undertaking a further school reorganisation programme and that he saw no need to introduce major changes to schools in the Rugby area including any significant changes to current surplus place numbers.

It was then unanimously Resolved:-

1. That the Rugby Area Committee informs Cabinet of their serious concerns for the proposals in the draft School Organisation Framework 2005/10 particularly with regard to the removal of surplus places in the light of known and anticipated further residential development in the Rugby area.

(2) That, in the light of the concerns highlighted in (1) above, the Cabinet be recommended to cease any further work on the Framework and to re-examine the principles governing the Framework taking into consideration the changes to the County Council's structure.

7. Warwickshire Provisional Local Transport Plan 2005

The report by the Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy was considered.

In considering the Plan, the following comments were recorded:-

- With regard to paragraph 3.5.57, the Committee agreed that any reference to Rugby East Parkway should be deleted from the Plan.
- Strong views expressed about the need to retain a regular train service between London, Rugby and the North West. Important opportunity to help promote the economic development of the Rugby area. Every opportunity should be taken to improve the service between Rugby and London. It was agreed that the wording of this section should be amended to reflect these views.
- It was noted that paragraph 3.5.40 should be deleted from the Plan in agreement with the Borough Council.
- Paragraph 3.5.43 should refer to Binley Woods and not Binley.

- It was noted that further consideration needed to be given to improving the bus service between Rugby and Walsgrave Hospital particularly with regard to the journey time and any new proposals incorporated into the Plan.

Roger Newham reported that the outcome of the public inquiry on the Rugby Western Relief Road was expected by the end of the month. On the assumption that the outcome of the inquiry favoured the County Council, it was expected that the contractors could be on site in Summer 2006.

It was then Resolved:-

That the comments of the Rugby Area Committee as set out above on the Eastern Warwickshire Chapter of the Provisional Local Transport Plan be reported back to the County Council.

8. Appointments to External Bodies

The report by the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive was considered.

1. Rugby BID Company Ltd

Councillor Collett, seconded by Councillor Timms, moved:-

That Councillor Vereker be appointed as the County Council's representatives on Rugby BID Company Ltd.

Councillor Wells, seconded by Councillor Roodhouse, moved:-

That Councillor King be so appointed.

On being put to a vote, Councillor Vereker was elected by 4 votes to 3.

2. Sustainable Rugby

Resolved:-

That Councillor Timms be appointed as the County Council's representatives on Sustainable Rugby.

It was also confirmed that Councillor Wells should be one of the County Council's representatives on Homestart – North East Warwickshire.

9. Update on Electoral Divisional Panels

The report by the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive was considered.

Councillor Collett in particular expressed his concern at the proposal to review the arrangements for the administration of Divisional Panels. Nick Darwen reassured Councillor Collett that there was no intention to alter their current arrangements unless they so wished but that, in the light of the new Divisions and the emerging neighbourhood agenda, it would be timely to review current practice. It was agreed that the Committee would consider a discussion paper at their next meeting.

10. Any Other Items

None.

11. Future Business Items

were noted.

At the request of Councillor Morris-Jones, Roger Newham agreed to look at whether it would be possible for a report to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the future of GEC Alstom and Peugeot.

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Chair of Committee

The meeting closed at 8.45pm