

Minutes of the meeting of the **RUGBY AREA COMMITTEE** held at the **TOWN HALL, RUGBY** on the **21 September 2006**.

Present:-

Councillor John Vereker (Chair)
“ Tom Cavanagh
“ Katherine King
“ Brian Levy
“ Philip Morris-Jones
“ Heather Timms
“ John Wells

Officers:-

Nick Darwen, Area Manager
Peter Endall, Senior Solicitor
Mark Gore, Head of Service – Education, Partnerships and School Development
Nick Gower-Johnson, County Partnerships Manager
Kit Leck, DAAT Manager
Claire Lloyd, Area Administration Officer
Ann Mawdsley, Senior Committee Administrator
Roger Newham, Chief Transport Planner

Also Attended:-

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Chief Superintendent David Whitehouse
Chief Inspector Martin Samuel

4 Members of the public and 1 member of the Press attended.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gordon Collett, Richard Dodd, Jerry Roodhouse and Ian Smith.

(2) Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Declarations of interest were recorded as follows –

- (1) by virtue of them serving as Rugby Borough Councillors as follows:-
Councillors Tom Cavanagh and Heather Timms.
- (2) Councillor Tom Cavanagh declared a personal interest in Item 4 as a Governor at Bilton School and Cawston Grange Primary School.
- (3) Councillor Katherine King declared a personal interest in Item 4 as a Governor at Bishop Wulstan Catholic School.

(3) Minutes of the Meeting held on the 13 July 2006 and Matters Arising

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Rugby Area Committee held on the 13 July 2006 be approved and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Page 3 – Question 2 – Anthony Gillias

Mark Gore reported that the Cabinet had agreed in principle that seatbelts should be provided, especially for primary school children, as soon as possible within resource limits. Officers were working towards ensuring, wherever possible that any renewed or new contracts with bus companies included the provision of seatbelts.

Page 3 – Question 3 – Neil Campbell

Councillor Philip Morris-Jones queried the officer response to Neil Campbell's question. Roger Newham confirmed that HGVs should be using the most appropriate roads which included A and B roads and the only way to prevent HGVs using these roads was to apply weighting, which would have to be enforced by the police.

Page 6 – Performance Report 2005/06

Councillor Katherine King said she felt the Committee should be engaging more with the County Youth Service and asked if representatives from the Service could attend an meeting to report on what was being done to meet priorities. Nick Darwen reported that they were scheduled to attend in January 2007.

Page 7 – Appointment to the Rugby Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Board (CDRP)

Councillor Katherine King referred to a letter sent to the Chair from the Chair of the CDRP pointing out that the other CDRPs in the County had only one or two County Councillors.

Following some discussion the Committee agreed that a reply should be sent to appoint three Members onto the CDRP Board. Peter Endall agreed to investigate on behalf of the Committee on how the membership of the CDRP Board was determined.

2. Public Question Time

Question 1 – Dennis Neville – Willoughby Parish Council

"In the light of the recent tragic deaths on the A45, which now brings the death toll on this stretch of road to eight, can we look forward to the Rugby Area Committee supporting the proposals discussed at the Public Meeting held at Willoughby with our local MP on 5th September?"

The proposal was for the stretch of the A45, from the M45 slip road through to the Northamptonshire boundary, to have a 40mph speed limit set with the relevant speed signage installed to support this, together with a pedestrian refuge being sited at the junction of the A45 with Main Street Willoughby, so as to facilitate crossing, particularly for elderly villagers.

If the Rugby Area Committee are able to support the above proposal, what steps are they able to take, either separately from Willoughby Parish Council or in conjunction with?

Willoughby Parish Council will also be contacting Dunchurch and Grandborough Parish Councils to establish if a joint approach in resolving this unacceptable traffic problem can be established.”

Response

The Chair reported on behalf of Councillor Gordon Collett as the local Member and noted his support of a 40 mph speed limit at Willoughby itself together with flashing warning signs.

Roger Newham replied that there were two issues to be considered:

1. The refuge – staff had not been able to find a safe location for the refuge but had held discussions with the bus company who had agreed to servicing Willoughby Village again on condition they had the co-operation from people in the village not to park where the bus would be blocked and that this would mean people getting off the bus would not need to cross the busy road.
2. Speed limit – Member’s clarification of the shorter stretch of road was useful and officer would look at the best way this could be delivered before reverting to the Committee. He added that the Police would only support a 50 mph speed limit.

The Committee agreed to receive a future report on this matter and recorded their support for a 40 mph speed limit.

Question 2 – Craig Colclasure, Chair of Rugby Town Centre Residents Association

It was agreed at a public meeting held by the Rugby Town Centre Residents Association on 13 September 2006, that WCC Highways would investigate the policy, design, and cost implications of an option of allowing verge/footway parking on the Northern side of Elsee Road. This option was discussed at length and had the unanimous support of the residents attending. This option will replicate the current situation.

Therefore I ask, can the Decriminalisation of Parking on Elsee Road be withdrawn from the change in enforcement regime while the proposal outlined above is being investigated and consulted?

Response

The Chair spoke on behalf of Councillor Ian Smith, noting his strong support that the wishes of the residents be granted.

Roger Newham replied it is not possible to withdraw the decriminalisation of parking enforcement on Elsee Road. Elsee Road is now in a Permitted Parking Area and a Special Parking Area under an Order made by the Secretary of State which provides for enforcement of traffic regulation orders and parking orders by Parking Attendants. To legally withdraw enforcement it would be necessary to formally revoke the current restrictions. This could only be achieved following consultation and advertisement of a formal proposal. The same consultation and advertisement process would then have to be repeated to re-introduce any revised restrictions.

By way of background to this matter, at the meeting on 10 May Members agreed that proposals to include Elsee Road in a combined residents parking zone (R2) should not proceed and that the existing "Residents Only" scheme remain in force. In addition officers were requested to review the parking arrangements in the road with a view to maximising the amount of parking available.

This review has been carried out and informal consultations have taken place with residents on proposals to increase the legitimate parking capacity by up to 12 vehicles. This would be achieved by transferring a length of limited waiting on the south side onto Moultrie Road, reducing the length of double yellow lines on the south side and by removing a length of double yellow lines on the north side at the eastern end of the street. There were mixed reactions to the proposals resulting in a request for officers to meet with the Residents Association on 13 September.

Elsee Road is not wide enough along its entire length to accommodate parking on both sides and when the residents parking scheme was first introduced double yellow lines were included on the north side. Double yellow lines impose a restriction on parking at any time on both the carriageway and any adjacent highway verge or footway. In recent years residents have been in the practice of parking partly on the double yellow lines and partly on the footway on the north side of the street. The police have not taken any action to discourage this but residents are aware that this situation may change with effect from 2 October with the new parking management regime. At the meeting with the Residents Association officers were asked to consider formalising the current practice by introducing a Footway Parking Order and, whilst this is under consideration, for no enforcement action to be undertaken by the Parking Attendants. Any change to the Traffic Regulation Orders is a matter for the County Council, as the Highway Authority. The County Council can seek to influence the level and frequency of enforcement and one of our objectives is to ensure that this is seen as being fair and equitable. However, ultimately, this is entirely an operational matter for Rugby Borough Council.

The footway on the north side of Elsee Road is about 2 metres wide and this reduces to about 1.5 metres when cars park there. Apart from those occasions when wheelie bins are placed out on the footway this is a reasonable width when compared with many other areas. However, a key objective in the County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) is to improve the quality of the walking environment. As a matter of policy and principle therefore, we should be working towards eliminating footway parking whenever possible. Footway parking can often represent a severe road safety problem particularly to the elderly, disabled, partially sighted and parents with prams and push chairs. In addition footways are regularly used to accommodate utility

services. They are not constructed to the same standards as carriageways and therefore both the surface and any underground services are liable to be damaged by vehicle encroachment.

An alternative request has been made for the carriageway to be widened so that vehicles could park on both sides and still allow a running lane wide enough for large vehicles. Again, this would not be in accordance with our LTP objectives but, in any event, it would cost a minimum of £25,000 (almost certainly considerably more to allow for any underground services to be diverted) and there is no budget available for this type of work. Simply lowering the kerbs on the north side to facilitate driving on and off (which would be desirable with a footway parking scheme) would cost at least £12,000.

In conclusion, we are unable to support a Footway Parking Order or widening of the carriageway in Elsee Road. We recommend that the proposals outlined above to increase the parking capacity by up to 12 spaces proceed to advertisement and that the question of enforcement of the double yellow lines be referred to Rugby Borough Council for consideration as an operational matter.

Members recorded their concerns about the road markings that had been done prior to implementation in October and that the Area Committee had only agreed on the condition that it would be beneficial to residents. The 12 new spaces created by the scheme were too few and posed a security issue, as people were not able to see their cars and asked that consideration be given to alternatives such as parking being allowed on one side of the road and clear markings to avoid blocking the pathway. The Committee noted that officers would be re-discussing the issue and reiterated their support that residents' wishes be fulfilled.

Question 3 – Richard Gunstone

Brinklow residents have long been concerned about traffic on the Brinklow to Coventry Road, B4027. We are glad that the County Council are planning to make the hill and bend at Woodhill Farm safer but the following two points have recently been put to me again:-

- 1) Is it possible to have a footpath along the road from Coomb Abbey to Brinklow?
- 2) The recent fatal accident at the junction of Coombfields Road and Coventry Road prompts us to ask if more vigorous enforcement of traffic speed regulations at this junction is possible.

Response from Roger Newham, Directorate of Environment and Economy

- 1) It was unlikely that a footpath could be put in place along the road from Coomb Abbey to Brinklow as this would cost in the region of £250,000.
- 2) Due to the late receipt of the question an answer had not been prepared and a written reply would be sent to Mr Gunstone.

Members requested that officers look at alternatives to linking through to Centenary Way and also at putting in place devices warning motorists of the dangerous intersection ahead.

3. Safer Neighbourhoods Policing

Chief Superintendent David Whitehouse gave a presentation to the Committee about the Warwickshire proposals for safer neighbourhood policing, noting it was 18 months in advance of the national programme. He added that while there had been a reduction in crime in Warwickshire it was important to continue to address the persistent feeling of insecurity and lack of police officers.

Rugby would have seven teams and while there would be no additional police resources, the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) would increase to 124. He added that the outcomes from safer neighbourhood policing would be:

- a stronger engagement process
- people being reassured
- less crime and disorder
- effective partnership working.

During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. PCSOs serving rural areas would be given bicycles to cover the larger areas with mobile police stations used to transport PCSOs to their patch.
2. PCSOs did not have powers of detention but were considered invaluable as the eyes and ears in the community.
3. The role of the LAA in carrying the programme forward was acknowledged, including greater accountability for Councillors.
4. A fortnightly e-mail with updates on local crimes, arrests etc was suggested as a good way of communicating between police and Councillors.
5. Members agreed that it would be better to consolidate police presence to Electoral Divisional Panels, and where there was a specific issue, local officers could be invited to attend Parish Council meetings.
6. Police surgeries would be set up by local teams accordingly to local needs.
7. The success of the programme would be monitored through satisfaction surveys and information at ward level available on the website.

The Chair thanked Chief Superintendent Whitehouse for his presentation.

4. Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families informing Members of progress to date on alternative proposals for Catholic provision in the town.

Mark Gore paid tribute to the officers of the Diocesan Schools Commission (DSC) and the school who had worked tirelessly to secure Catholic provision in Rugby.

During the ensuing discussion the following comments were noted:

1. Members were pleased to note the improved attainment at the School and that the numbers on the role had increased far in excess of those anticipated, not taking into account new pupils from Daventry.

2. The Catholic provision would continue to enrich the total spread of provision in the area and would also cater to Catholic immigrants from Europe as well as children from different faiths wanting to attend a faith school.
3. Members thanked officers for the work they had done with partners to move the proposals forward and noted their hope for success for the new school and their wish to be fully engaged with the process.
4. The Fresh Start proposal was still dependent on agreement by the DfES who would want assurance the proposals would result in a successful school.

It was then Resolved that the Area Committee:-

1. Notes the report.
2. agrees to hold a special meeting together with the DSC to consider a response to the consultation on the fresh start project in order to meet deadlines.
3. agrees that a further report on Catholic provision in Rugby be presented to the Area Committee in due course.

5. Black Path Footbridge – Provision of Improved Facilities for Pedestrians and Cyclists

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy seeking authority from the Area Committee to undertake a consultation on a proposed scheme to improve the southern section of the footbridge.

Resolved:-

That Area Committee authorises a consultation to be undertaken on a proposed improvement to the Black Path footbridge, the results of which will be brought before the next Area Committee for further consideration.

6. Development of the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development summarising progress made to date in relation to the development of the Warwickshire LAA.

Nick Gower-Johnson noted that Members had received hard copies of the first preliminary draft and had the opportunity to engage in defining local priorities. He added that the first draft would be sent to Government on 29 September and a final draft would be brought to the Committee in January 2007 to discuss and endorse.

Resolved:-

That the Area Committee notes the current position in respect to the development of the Local Area Agreement.

7. Draft Sustainable Community Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development introducing the Draft Sustainable Community Strategy for the Rugby Area 2007-2010.

Nick Darwen informed Members that the Strategy was between the Area Committee and local partners and was developed in tandem with the LAA and focussing on the delivery of priorities locally, meeting local needs.

Resolved:-

That the Area Committee notes the Draft Sustainable Community Strategy.

8. Action Plan Update – Drugs Substance and Alcohol Misuse (Rugby Panel)

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development advising the Area Committee on progress in relation to the Action Plan following the report of the Rugby Panel enquiry into Drugs, Substance and Alcohol Misuse in Rugby.

Kit Leck made the following points:

1. Drugs, Substance and Alcohol misuse were key features of the LAA and the Safer Neighbourhoods Policing initiative and the service was well linked into these processes.
2. The Council had a robust system of recording data and information and the addition of a Neighbourhood Policing Analyst would improve the system further.
3. Warwickshire had been cited as best practice in the West Midlands for conversions from the point of arrest through to recovery and were the aware of the challenge facing the service in maintaining this position.
4. The Warwickshire Alcohol Strategy was complete with all partners signed up and an Implementation Plan would be in place by the end of October.
5. Work with GPs and pharmacies was on target. Work was ongoing with the local pharmaceutical community on the Legal Exchange Scheme but this would have cost pressures.
6. There were resources available from Government for housing and work was being carried out with Solihull and Coventry to put in place housing in Coventry where users would receive support to ensure successful and sustained rehabilitation.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- i. The service had worked closely with the PCTs, particularly Rugby PCT and expected to continue to have a good working relationship with the single PCT.
- ii. The new information system would allow information on an anonymous basis to be shared by other services. Hotspots for different issues such as drugs and criminal offences could be overlaid to give a wider picture.
- iii. Drug Rehabilitation Requirement Orders were used for people over 17 years of age and progress had been slow due mostly to the issue of police and other services being able to identify users suitable for the orders.
- iv. Targets for young people had all been met with 100% assessed and 100% referred for specialist treatment.

The Chair thanked Kit Leck for the encouraging process he had reported.

Resolved:-

That the Area Committee notes the progress against the Action Plan.

9. Rugby Area Business Plan 2006/07

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development proposing a timetable to enable Rugby Area Committee to review the County Council's performance in selected areas.

Nick Darwen noted that the Chief Executive of the Borough Council would be invited to join Members for the proposed workshop on crime and community safety and he would liaise with Members on suitable dates.

Resolved:-

That the Area Committee agree to the timetable as detailed in the report.

10. Update on Electoral Divisional Panels

Resolved, having considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, that the Committee notes the update on the issues discussed recently at Rugby Electoral Divisional Panels.

11. Any Other Items

The Committee agreed that Councillor Heather Timms replace Councillor John Vereker as the Warwickshire County Council representative on the Rugby Cement Community Forum.

12. Future Business Items

Resolved to agree the future work programme.

The meeting closed at 8:20 pm

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Chair of Committee